Thanksgiving after Holy Communion

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THANKSGIVING
AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

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Thanksgiving after Holy Communion

In Union with the Sacred Heart

Translated from the French of

The Rev. G. Villefranche, S.J.

by

Irene Hernaman

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LETTER OF APPROBATION FROM MONSEIGNEUR SEVIN

(Archbishop of Lyons)

TO WHOM THE BOOK IS SPECIALLY DEDICATED

REVEREND FATHER,

In your beautiful treatise on "Thanksgiving after Communion" you have not, like other writers, been content with simply tracing out a brief method for us, and giving us some prayers. Your desire is to give to your readers a more solid foundation; you raise up their souls to an habitual condition of heavenly knowledge and love, that at the right moment will express itself in fervent acts.

You believe rightly that Our Lord does not come to us only "to receive our homage, but also to aid us to honour His Divine Father."

This thought has inspired you to write several chapters, remarkably interesting and full of sublime doctrine, in which you show how to render to God the Father, through Jesus Christ present within us, the love and gratitude and other sentiments which we should feel towards Him.

And in order to develop further the ideas that form as it were the ground-work of this

volume, you have drawn a number of passages and holy words from the writings of the Saints and theologians. But above all you have meditated on the Gospel, and we feel that before teaching us what are the riches of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you have experienced them yourself.

Your book closes with a chapter on the Thanksgiving of Children. A long experience of the ministry among the little ones has suggested to you, Reverend Father, some ingenious ways of arousing their interest in the coming of their Lord, and the priests who are forming them to Eucharistic piety will learn from you some excellent ideas for their own use.

We are glad to be able warmly to recommend this the first published volume of one of our dearest former pupils, whom we bless affectionately.

✠ HECTOR-IRÉNÉE,

Archbishop of Lyons.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THIS little volume, which we present to the English Catholic public, contains much that is new and of interest. While serving principally as a guide for suitably employing the time of thanksgiving after Holy Communion, it is also admirably adapted both as a book of meditations, and for spiritual reading.

In France it has been accorded an enthusiastic reception; the first edition was exhausted in six months. We hope that a similar welcome awaits it in this country.

PREFACE

UNDER the twofold influence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Eucharistic congresses, but, above all, owing to the pressing invitations of the Sovereign Pontiffs, the faithful go to Holy Communion more and more frequently; in the case of many preparation for, and thanksgiving after, Holy Communion have become almost daily practices, and the more frequent these are, the more necessary it becomes to assist communicants to accomplish them with profit to their souls.

Books that treat of the preparation for, and the reception of, Holy Communion abound; those that give in detail different methods of thanksgiving are rare. Many merely touch the subject; very few penetrate to its depths.

In the present manual, which is at the same time both theoretical and practical, we desire to supply this want by giving to communicants some clearly defined instructions as to the way to employ well the time when the Divine Host is present within them, for, according to the opinion of the Saints, these are the most precious moments of the spiritual life.

Many persons, although they give the

accustomed time to their thanksgiving, suffer from distractions and spiritual dryness. Let them carefully go over and test these different methods. By personal experience and the action of Divine grace, they will promptly find those that suit them best, and soon their Communions will produce an abundance of fruit, and they will find more savour in this Bread, "which containeth in itself all sweetness."

Our purpose, to which reference is made in the third and more detailed part, is to initiate souls into a practice of the highest importance, which is boldly inculcated in the Gospels and in the Liturgy, and yet is commonly neglected. In the larger number of books of piety under the heading "Prayers after Holy Communion," there are only acts which have Our Lord as their end and object. Now, although it is good to commence with the Divine Master as the object of our love, this is not sufficient.

Our Lord is present within us, not only to receive our homage, but also to aid us to render to God the homage we owe to Him. "Hallowed be Thy name": is not this the first desire of His filial Heart? He is the Way that leads to the Father; we must therefore make use of Him in order to reach our appointed end, which is the Father. He will lead us into the bosom of the Godhead—we ought not to stay without; He is

our Advocate, therefore we must use His voice to address the Holy Trinity.

Further, without in any way neglecting the acts which we make directly to Our Lord, we shall give a wider scope to those which it is our duty to address *by Him, with Him, and in Him* to the Divine Majesty.

This little treatise is not meant as a chain to bind the soul and hinder its free flight; it might more justly be compared to a map, which, while it sets in relief the principal roads, does not forget to mark the less important routes for the benefit of the pedestrian, who one day may desire to explore this or that region.

The soul is free to choose what she likes, taking this and leaving that; she may perhaps follow paths which we have not traced out ourselves, but which she will have the charm of discovering for herself, and that will be well. Our part is to direct and to suggest; we do not wish in any way to restrict private initiative, but rather to encourage it and lead it aright. That which a soul draws from within herself, however little, is more than the finest sentiments borrowed from others; for this reason we have refrained from giving set formulas.

Many quotations from the Gospels are given, but the number of texts has been carefully limited, lest the volume should have the appearance of a mere book of reference;

and that is why reference has been given to less familiar passages. Frequent mention will be made of two excellent books, from which many useful paragraphs have been taken—"La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur de Jésus," by Bainvel (first edition of 1906), and "Les Litanies du Sacré Cœur," by Drive (Casterman edition of 1906).

The devotion to the Sacred Heart has a prominent part in this manual. This loving Heart has been revealed to us as an inexhaustible treasure, and it is chiefly in Holy Communion that It communicates Itself to man; so that a prayer-book for thanksgiving might be defined as a guide to making a good use of the wonderful riches of the Sacred Heart after Holy Communion.

These simple considerations, which in the first place were given as a series of conferences for the month of the Sacred Heart, will, if desired, form appropriate reading for the month of June.

The book is dedicated, as an act of homage, to His Grace the Archbishop of Lyons, one of our masters in theology who, with a piety equal to his learning, explained to us the wonders of Divine grace and the Holy Eucharist.

May the author and all those who help to diffuse this little book share in the blessings promised to them who endeavour to propagate the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

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THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

BOOK I

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER I

IMPORTANCE OF THANKSGIVING

THE Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* of December 20, 1905, not only recommends frequent and daily Communion, but also draws attention to the careful manner in which we should make our preparation and thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

The Congregation of Council says: "But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law take effect by their own virtue, *ex opere operato*, nevertheless they produce a greater effect in proportion to the good dispositions of the communicant; therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties" (Decree concerning Daily Communion).

Every page of this volume will emphasize the importance of thanksgiving. But we

must guard ourselves from exaggeration. In the first article of the Decree we learn that every Communion made in a state of grace, and with a right intention, is profitable to the soul, strengthens her union with Jesus, and fortifies her spiritual life. Far be it from us even to think that more perfect dispositions are necessary. Provided that we have these dispositions which have been laid down as requisite, the fact that we have only a limited time to give to our thanksgiving is never a valid excuse for abstaining from Holy Communion.

Having made this clear, it is our duty, in common with all the masters of the spiritual life, to censure the harmful practice of reducing to a minimum the time spent in converse with our Divine Visitor, when it is within our power to be more generous.

The Venerable Father Eymard remarks "that, when our time is limited, it is better to shorten the preparation, so as to have more leisure for thanksgiving; for there are no moments in life so holy and so precious as those when we possess Our Lord in body and in soul. To cut short our thanksgiving is a common temptation. The devil knows its value; self-love and our lower nature fear its effects. Therefore let us fix the period of time we will devote to it, and never curtail it by even one moment save for urgent necessity. . . . We say that we have no time for

our thanksgiving, though we find sufficient for useless conversations. "O my God! when shall we understand all that we owe Thee?"

"Is it possible," cries St. Bernard, "that when we have received Christ He should so quickly become distasteful to us?"

"What!" says St. John Chrysostom "Jesus Christ gives you His flesh to eat, and in return He does not receive one word of gratitude from you! You do not even give thanks for so great a benefit! Truly this is to scorn Him!"*

"The time which follows Holy Communion," says St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "is the most precious in our whole life, the most opportune for conversing with God, and for enkindling Divine love in our hearts." All the Saints speak in like manner, and their words are based both on theological reasoning and their own personal experiences. Our Lord is within us in order to quicken our faith, our confidence, and our love; is it, then, surprising that the length of time that He remains in our heart should be exceptionally favourable for increasing our fervour?

Père Chaignon, in his beautiful book, "Le Prêtre à l'Autel" (chap. viii.), uses these words: "Many theologians teach that the acts of virtue produced immediately after

* Homily, De Bapt. Christi.

Communion have a special merit of their own, because they are performed by a soul which is substantially united to the Son of God. Every act that we make during these happy moments is inspired by Him Who has become the life of our life, the soul of our soul. Jesus Christ performs them with us; we adore, He adores; we give thanks, He gives thanks. Our actions, like His, with which they are intermingled, are in some way theandric or divinely human; it is this which draws God to look down upon us with pleasure. St. Alphonsus Liguori desires that confessors shall urge their penitents to make a thanksgiving that is a living reality, and spend as long a time over it as is possible to each individual.* Theologians, he says, assure us that during the space of time that the Holy Species subsist—*tandis que subsistent*—the fruits of Communion increase in proportion to the number of acts which are made.

In this passage the holy doctor alludes to the effects proper to the Sacrament, which are called *ex opere operato*. These effects, which in the first place are proportionate to the dispositions which the Divine Visitor finds on His arrival, will be considerably augmented if, before His departure—that is to say, before the alteration of the Holy Species—these good dispositions are in-

* Appendix I., Selva II.

creased. This remark is of so great an importance that we shall refer to it again in a special chapter (Chapter XXXIII.).

We will close this chapter with a luminous page from St. Teresa. "My daughters," she cries, "remain on good terms with the Divine Master, and do not lose the hour that follows Holy Communion. It is an excellent time to negotiate with Him, to treat of our affairs, and to be instructed by Him. . . . When Our Lord was upon the earth, the sick were cured by contact with His garments; can we doubt that He will perform miracles while He is within us, if only we have a living faith? . . . Certainly this adorable Master is not accustomed to make a poor return for His stay in the hostelry of our soul, provided that we give Him a glad welcome. . . . He loves to keep us company. Since, therefore, we know for a certainty that He is within us while the accidents of bread remain uncorrupted, we must not in any way lose this presence of our Divine Saviour; for if we leave Him immediately after having communicated and go off to worldly occupations, we ought not to complain that our soul makes so little progress in the way of salvation."*

* Life by Ribeira, IV., chap. xiii

CHAPTER II

HOLY COMMUNION DEMANDS THE CO-OPERATION OF MAN

BEFORE we speak of thanksgiving, a preliminary question presents itself. Is there an *action* in Holy Communion? Is it suitable for us to act ourselves when we receive Him Who is omnipotent? Should not the soul keep herself passive during her thanksgiving? The Fathers tell us that Christ comes to incorporate us with Himself. Is there anything to be done but to let Him operate? The answer is easy. We recognize that in the process of our assimilation to Christ by Holy Communion the preponderant part falls to Him: but no comparison can be drawn between the work that He comes to accomplish and that which He demands of us; but the relative insignificance of our share in the Divine operation does not dispense us altogether from giving our assistance. In the early Church only the little children who were admitted to Holy Communion before they had attained the use of reason were dispensed. This is not the place to examine in what measure, in certain mystical states, the communicant's activity is lessened: we are not writing for extraordinary cases such as these.

It is true, also, that after receiving Our

Lord it is good to begin with profound adoration, during which life is as it were suspended; all is silent before the Supreme Majesty, and so much the better if some favoured soul succeeds in remaining for a long time in this state of mute respect. Further, it is fitting that the soul should allow for moments of silence, even amid the full activity of thanksgiving, when the ear of the soul shall be listening to hear what the Divine Master has to say to her: "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me" (Ps. lxxxiv. 9).

But our mobile faculties soon become restless when their natural activity is suspended, and to persist in this state without special grace would lead to ennui, and ultimately to distaste for this banquet, whose property it is to give joy.

No false mysticism! The word "thanksgiving," universally adopted by tradition, means that we must *act*. St. Thomas Aquinas declares: "The peculiarity of this Sacrament is not only to give charity or habitual grace, but to excite us to acts of charity—in the words of St. Paul, the Charity of Christ urges us."*

These charming words of St. Francis of Sales, "After Communion we ought to detach our souls from the love of this world and fill them with holy affections," are in

* Q. LXXIX., A. 4.

entire accordance with the invitation of St. Alphonsus Liguori: "Let our thanksgiving be a real exercise: *anima in amando et petendo se exerceat.*"

We have wandered far from a state of idle passivity, and are brought back to the great principle laid down by St. Ignatius Loyola: "Providence, which disposes all things, sweetly demands the co-operation of His creatures." God is consistent with Himself. It is not without reason that He has given man faculties and freewill. In return He expects from him a due proportion of spontaneous activity, and does him the honour of allowing him to be a partner in the work of his own sanctification. This Divine economy has few exceptions; even in the case of miracles Our Lord respects it. He deigns to change the water into wine, but first the six water-pots at Cana must be filled with water. He will find the miraculous fish, but first St. Peter must cast the net on the side He shall indicate. He is ready to feed the multitude by an act of His Divine power, but instead of creating all the loaves, He sent the disciples to bring those they have already. In the case of sacraments offered to adults, the Divine Master never departs from the natural order. To eat a consecrated Host in ignorance, imagining that It is unconsecrated, is neither a sacrilege nor a fruitful Communion, be-

cause the desire to communicate is absent. The first act of co-operation, therefore, which is demanded of man is to approach *voluntarily* the Holy Table. Another no less important act of co-operation is, that he should first examine his conscience so as to be able to appear at the feast in the wedding garment—that is to say, in a state of grace.

Provided that we honestly believe we are in a state of grace and have a right intention, it is always profitable to go to Holy Communion; the more so because, if this right intention is not withdrawn but persevered in, at least virtually, during the time of Communion, it will in itself constitute our act of thanksgiving. But to be perforce content with this *minimum* is not to advise it. The full measure of co-operation which our Divine Guest expects from us is indicated in Article 4 of the Decree of 1905: "Therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by a serious preparation, and followed by a *suitable* thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties." The fruits will be few if we do not respond to this pressing invitation.

The theologians like to make use of symbolical phraseology when speaking of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord desires to be eaten; we eat because we are hungry, and eating entails certain acts. In order that

bread should give us proper nourishment it is not sufficient that it should be of a good quality, nor merely put into the mouth and swallowed. It must first be masticated and mixed with saliva; next it is attacked by the digestive organs, and slowly dissolved by the gastric juices. If this long and methodic physiological action is not properly carried out, the assimilation will be defective, and the nutrition incomplete: this is a picture of a badly-made thanksgiving.

Sometimes an invalid eats well and yet remains weakly, for the reason that he does not properly digest his food. And it is possible, alas! to make many Communions in a state of grace and yet to bear very little fruit. The explanation is, that this supernatural Bread is not sufficiently digested; we do not take the trouble to stir up feelings of love for our Divine Host. Consequently, although through the action of habitual grace some effect is produced, it is minimized, and above all, those graces which it is the property of the Sacrament to bestow are lost.

All the pious writers agree in affirming that these actual fruits cannot be produced unless the soul is attentive and corresponds to the motions of Divine charity. Later, at a time when she is better disposed, she may endeavour to recover some of it, but she has lost the shower of graces which would have

been hers during the time that the Real Presence of Our Lord was within her. The precious fruits of a good Communion—the awakening of faith, a burning love for God and our neighbour, sensible devotion, spiritual joy, zeal for good works, courage to mortify our corrupt nature, detestation of venial sin—all these precious effects will be granted only in proportion to the measure of our co-operation.

These beautiful words of Father Tesnière merit quotation: "In this Divine co-operation we must bring our acts of faith and love daily renewed to bear upon this living Bread, which has descended into our hearts; and in the same way as the food of the body, in order to properly nourish our organism, must be assimilated by the digestive organs, so these acts must do their work in dissolving the spiritual juices. Our acts of faith, our absorbed gaze will operate upon this Divine Food, breaking it up and dispersing it, while, by our self-oblation and love, we become one with Him, and thus mingle together in this spiritual mastication the Food and the one who is fed. If we do not take this trouble, although our Communion will work certain essential effects, others, which are most valuable, will be lost." *

* Tesnière, "Somme de la Préd. Euchar.," Part I., p. 452.

CHAPTER III

THANKSGIVING IN MOMENTS OF CONSOLATION OR OF ARIDITY

THERE is room, therefore, for our personal action in our thanksgiving—that is to say, that in a given space of time we have to make a series of interior acts of importance. But is it advisable that these acts should follow a certain order? In other words, is it advantageous to have a set *method?*

The value of a method has been often disputed, on the grounds of the freedom which should be left to every soul, that our feelings cannot be forced into a systematic line. The Saints knew nothing of these restrictions; filled with Divine love, they were content to follow the impulse of the moment. Why cannot we do the same?

In the first place let us remember that the Saints had their days of spiritual dryness, when we have every reason to believe they made use of some method. In any case, it was usually by the conscientious use of a method that they trained their emotions; but we must give the subject a wider application. Let us allow that we can dispense with a method whenever the heart is full to overflowing. The Saints were frequently in this state, when they had merely to open the door of their heart and yield them-

selves up to the impulsion of the Holy Spirit.

On the day when feelings of sensible devotion are granted to us, when the trembling soul is filled with a burning fervour, we must be careful not to resist the motions of Divine grace. Let us make our own those words of St. Augustine: "Love, and then do what you will." Whether our inclinations draw us towards acts of adoration, love, gratitude, reparation, compassion, or confidence, let us follow this leading, or, rather, let us yield to the promptings of grace, and be on our guard against attempting to substitute our own impulses for those of the Divine Spirit.

"If, when Jesus Christ comes to us," says Father Croiset,* "He gives us sensible proofs of His presence, such as He usually vouchsafes to those who have a special devotion to His Sacred Heart, let us make the most of these precious moments, and keep ourselves in the closest interior recollection while listening to Our Lord, and leave grace to act. If we do not impede its action by voluntary distractions . . . it will accomplish miracles. The mere thought of the presence of the Sacred Heart within us, will often inflame our souls with wonderful devotion. Mary Magdalene, in adoration at the feet of Our Divine Saviour, is the model for a soul

* "La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur," Book II., chap. vii.

after Holy Communion; if she speaks, it is merely to pour forth her expressions of love and joy. From time to time we can use such words as these: "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him and I will not let Him go" (Cant. iii. 4). "My God and my all." "My beloved to me, and I to Him" (Cant. ii. 16). Or, "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii. 25).

Or perhaps there may come into our minds a verse from some hymn, or the words of a familiar prayer repeated slowly one by one make a vivid impression upon us; let us by all means make use of them. We are told of a holy priest, that he liked to imagine that the Blessed Virgin in her thanksgiving must often have done nothing else than sweetly repeat the words of the *Magnificat*, which she first said when Jesus was within her.

Often after his Mass St. Francis Xavier would fall into an ecstasy. St. Philip Neri and St. Ignatius Loyola were obliged to use violence to themselves so that they should not fall into ecstasy before they had left the altar. They had no need of any method.

It is sufficient to look at the statue of the Blessed Curé d'Ars, in the act of making his thanksgiving, his hands clasped, his emaciated form leaning forward, his eyes fixed on the tabernacle, to understand that he certainly

had no need of set formulas: God Himself directed his acts.

Although she may not have attained to any great heights of perfection, a pious soul will probably experience, and that frequently, some moments of spiritual sweetness after Communion. Our Lord grants her this consolation, both in order to encourage her in the right way, and also because it is one of the properties of the Blessed Sacrament to bestow spiritual joy. But St. Antoninus* enumerates no fewer than eight reasons why these sentiments are not always to be had, and many of these reasons are due to no fault on our part.

Father Faber, in his "All for Jesus" (chap. vii.) writes sadly: "For the greater number of us, the one time in our life which is tedious, wearisome, and fruitless, is the quarter of an hour which we devote to our thanksgiving. We can find nothing to say."

These words, inspired probably by the desire to spur the soul to vigorous action, may seem somewhat exaggerated; but no one would dare to assert that the evil does not exist. A remedy must be found, and that which Father Faber indicates is the one which we are about to explain in this chapter—namely, the use of a method. We know of no other.†

* Part III., Div. III., chap. v.

† If in "All for Jesus" Father Faber had explained the different methods of thanksgiving, we

We see, therefore, that it is wise to make some provision, above all, for persons who communicate frequently, so that they may know how to occupy the time when they find themselves thrown on their own resources, and a prey to desolation and confusion. Certain writers are not sufficiently explicit when, having developed at length the practice of preparation before Communion, they speak of thanksgiving, but content themselves with a few remarks such as: "How our heart burns when God is there! Let it speak, and listen to the answers of Jesus, that is enough!" It is wiser to prepare beforehand for the times of spiritual dryness, which in a greater or lesser degree come to all souls. Father Lintelo, one of the great apostles of Daily Communion, gives this advice: "It is good to foresee how we shall employ the time before and after Communion. Many never think of it until it comes, and therefore make a bad use of it."*

No one doubts the utility of methods in meditation, and it is difficult to see how they

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should not, perhaps, have brought out this manual But he has confined himself to giving a short summary of Father Lanciscius's method, which he finds —and we agree with him—"full of grand thoughts, but much too long and detailed, and suitable chiefly as providing material for further development." This criticism seems well founded.

* Triduum II., Part III.

can be less useful in thanksgiving; and those who at first make a regular use of this practice are just the very persons who, most probably, will attain to such a degree of devotion, that, in course of time, they will find that they can eventually almost dispense with them.

CHAPTER IV

THANKSGIVING UNDER STRESS OF GREAT EMOTION

An intense feeling of spiritual consolation is not the only absorbing emotion which can cause us to forego the use of a method. Even sentiments of the natural order at certain times can so engross the soul that it is well-nigh hopeless and a waste of effort to endeavour to escape from them. In such a case, whether the emotion is one of joy or sorrow, after a moment of profound adoration, the only course is to take this grief or joy to the Heart of our Divine Master present within us, and let it spend itself there. He will shed upon our poor heart some drops of that heavenly balm which will tranquillize and purify our natural emotions.

When a member of our family falls suddenly seriously ill, we must not attempt to turn away our thoughts from him; it will suffice to say, with the sisters of Lazarus:

"Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick" (St. John xi. 3).

St. Augustine tells us that after the death of his mother he wept freely for several days. At first he tried to restrain his tears, but later he regretted having done so. "Shall I not, in my turn," he cries, "shed some tears for her who wept so long over me?" And we may be sure that during the time of his thanksgiving he did not drive away the thought of St. Monica, but spoke of her to the Divine Saviour. Was it not her last request that he should remember her at the altar?

When we mourn the loss of a dear one, we must turn to Him Who is the Divine Consoler, and listen to His tender voice saying: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28). In the meeting of the Eucharist He will gaze on us with compassion, as He looked upon the sorrowing widow of Naim. Our tears, like hers, will touch His Heart with pity; He was "moved with mercy towards her" (St. Luke vii. 13), and He will comfort us.

Remember how, at the sight of the sisters of Bethany weeping over Lazarus, He Himself shed tears. "And Jesus wept" (St. John xi. 35), and as He gave back the son to the sorrowing mother, so He restored the brother to his sisters,

It is true that Jesus will not bring our dead back to life, but He will reassure us as to their eternal destiny, and say to us, as He said to Martha: "Thy brother shall rise again. I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live" (St. John xi. 23, 25). Then shall we beg Him to take that soul, not from the tomb but from Purgatory, or even from eternal damnation. But we may ask: Can we pray that a soul whose lot is already fixed may be snatched from everlasting death? We can, since the Church does so in her Liturgy. Our prayer is a *moral cause*, and God, Who has foreseen it, can be moved by it. A moral cause can produce its effect before it is itself in existence. In order to be efficacious it is sufficient that He Who knows all things shall *foresee it*. Did not God preserve the Blessed Virgin from all stain of sin before the Incarnation and Passion, through the *foreseen* merits of Jesus Christ? He can also grant a deathbed repentance to this dying person, because of the *foreseen* suffrages of the Church, and the generosity of the prayers, Communions, and mortifications offered by us for this soul. It was with such thoughts that Father de Ravignan sought to console a pious queen, whose only son died suddenly of a carriage accident, before he could receive the Last Sacraments. Oh, the happiness of speaking

to Our Lord in Holy Communion about our departed!

Let us imagine the case of a child who is the idol of his mother—perhaps she loves him so much that she almost forgets God—and now the cradle is empty. Where shall that mother go to pour out her grief save to Him Who consoled the mothers of Bethlehem, by raising their little ones to the glorious rank of Holy Innocents? Jesus will soften her pain, and by His gentle words, "Have I not to get fresh recruits for My Angel-band?" change her feelings of irritation against the dispositions of Providence. Happy those mothers whose little ones people heaven!

Whatever may be the nature of our sufferings, whether physical or moral, they can all lead us to Jesus. He alone can say to us: "Come unto Me, you who are bruised, and I will give you courage." And if we go to Jesus it will be with the express intention of telling Him of our trouble; that is the purpose of our coming.

In all our sorrows, whether they be a shattered hope, a law-suit that has gone against us, a reverse of fortune, a personal insult inflicted by one near to us, an accident which deprives us of sight or hearing—whatever may be the cause, we can gain great merit by accepting it with resignation. The thanksgiving which is spent in repeating—it may be twenty times—an act of confidence

in the Sacred Heart will bear much fruit. St. Vincent of Paul wrote to Louise de Marillac: "As a diamond is worth more than a mountain of common stone, so one act of confidence in God's Will surpasses any number of good works."

When once Monsignor de Ségur grasped the fact that he was blind, he probably had little difficulty in choosing a method for his thanksgiving; it was easy also on the occasion when a young man came to him and informed him that he had committed a gross outrage upon the Blessed Sacrament. In both cases external circumstances provided a sufficient theme for his converse with the Sacred Heart.

We are told that on one occasion bread ran short at the little orphanage of Ars. We can picture to ourselves the Curé passing his time of thanksgiving after his Mass in weeping and imploring the Divine Providence for aid, so that he should not be obliged to send away his orphans; then he rose from his knees, and went to look at the one remaining lump of dough which he had left in the kneading-trough on the previous evening, and taking it in his hands he began to knead it, when suddenly it swelled up until it had risen to the level of the sides of the pan. May we not believe that this miracle was an answer to his fervent Mass and thanksgiving?

It is not necessary that the incident which absorbs our attention should be of great importance in itself. Whatever it may be, if it is something which touches the heart and mind, it can form matter for our heart-to-heart converse with the Divine Host, even if perhaps He gently reproaches because we have allowed ourselves to be troubled by so small a matter.

Let us add that emotions of joy as well as of sorrow can be made use of in our thanksgiving. For example, it is probable that for many days to come the memory of the miraculous multiplication of bread must have occupied the thoughts of the holy Curé during his Eucharistic colloquy, and made him pour out his heart in expressions of joy and gratitude to his Divine Benefactor.

CHAPTER V

A POINT COMMON TO ALL METHODS—READING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

THE Christian life is not composed solely or principally of moments of consolation, or of some great emotion. On the days when our feelings are dead and we are left to our own devices and a prey to distractions, we find the benefit of a set method. But before we explain these methods in detail there is one point common to them all, which should be mentioned. In every case it is supposed

that the first moments after the arrival of the Divine Guest will be spent in adoration; this is the necessary ceremonial.

Certain masters of the spiritual life affirm that these moments of adoration should be prolonged, but this is not obligatory, since the act of faith will form the foundation for all the acts which follow; it must never be omitted altogether.

In "The Priest at the Altar" Father Chaignon shows the importance of this practice: "In the presence of this infinitely great and lovable Majesty the eyes should be closed to exterior things; all should be silent: 'But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him' (Hab. ii. 20). We must retire with Jesus into the sanctuary of our heart, and remain there as long as we can, in a silence full of respect and admiration, while we contemplate the King of the universe. And there in His presence, all the movements of the soul in suspense, let His Divine substance penetrate and transform all our faculties, and in such a manner take possession of our whole being that His Divine life is substituted for our human life: 'He that eateth me, the same shall live by me' (St. John vi. 58). There is no way of honouring God which better expresses the relation between His sovereign greatness and our own nothingness than this suspension of all movement, all reasoning,

and, in a certain sense of our life, in His presence. By it we acknowledge that He is infinitely above us, so that no thoughts, and still more no words, of ours, can express what He is, and we do homage for all that we are to His infinite Being." St. Teresa requires that our first act shall be a simple look of admiration: "O my daughters! since from the moment when you receive Jesus Christ you have Him within you, *shut the eyes of the body so that you may be able to open the eyes of the soul.* Gaze upon Him; He is in your heart." And we may well imagine that she is recounting a personal experience when she adds: "I knew a person who for several years was so full of faith at the moment of Communion that she saw Our Lord really present with her, as if she had seen Him enter with her own eyes. . . . She tried to collect her senses. . . . She thought of herself as being at the feet of Jesus Christ, and, like Magdalene, washing them with her tears. . . . When sensible devotion was absent, she was content to know by faith that He was there in His place." *

"Let us close our eyes and ears," says Monsabré, "and remain for some moments motionless and in complete recollection, silently absorbed in the mystery of our union with Jesus Christ, so that we may be able, as

* "Way of Perfection," chap. xxxv

far as lies in our power, to make the most of His presence within us. The silent adoration of the creature is the form of praise most befitting to the Divine Majesty. . . . Let us, then, keep silence, and adore Him before whose face the mighty ones of Heaven and earth are not worthy to appear; and say to Him by our very nothingness: 'Thou only art great, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only art worthy of all honour and glory.'"*

"Adore in silence," says Père Éymard, "when you feel that your soul is withdrawn into the calm presence of Our Lord. Remain there: it is the sweet slumber of the soul on His Breast, and you will find more profit from this grace which so sweetly unites you to your Beloved, than in any other spiritual exercise. When this state passes, then acts of thanksgiving must be adopted."†

Père Giraud remarks: "This state of silence and abandonment may last some time . . . and we ought not to try to end it. But it is not in our power to gain this special grace and sense of peace. . . . We therefore should have at our disposal a series of acts so that we may not remain for the rest of the time in a state of listless torpor."

These acts, arranged in a certain order, constitute what we term a method. But which shall we adopt? And first let us ask

* "La Prière Divine: Le Pater."
† Second Series. p 72.

whether it is desirable to turn to vocal prayer immediately after Holy Communion? Such a practice is only to be advised to those persons who are incapable of conversing mentally with their Divine Guest.

The habit of immediately taking up a book of prayers is not to be recommended: we have something better to do than to begin reading at once; the Blessed Curé d'Ars censured this practice. Too often these formulas are the outpourings of a heated imagination, or even if inspired by a real piety, come from a spiritual state quite different from our own, and are ill adapted to our present condition. These burning words are so violent a contrast with our present insensibility that they will in all probability shock and disgust us; certain minds will be disheartened by them. They may even have a harmful effect if they suggest to the soul some of the hardest acts in God's service: "Lord, let me suffer a thousand deaths, let me rather pass through fire and water than betray Thee"—and the rest. Why should we subject our poor souls to a test for which grace has not prepared them? If God calls us to suffer martyrdom, He will in the proper time and place give us the necessary courage. For the moment all that He asks is that we should promise to be faithful to Him under present difficulties and shut our eyes to the future. Did not the Divine Master say to us in the

Sermon on the Mount: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"? (St. Matt. vi. 34).

Even when these formulas are neither exaggerated nor over-sentimental, they are still too impersonal. Monseigneur Landriot compares them to artificial flowers, which maybe are pretty enough in themselves, but are without vitality and perfume. How much more pleasing to the Divine Gardener will be a little living flower, grown with difficulty in the barren soil of our own heart! He loves it because it is our own, and because He made it germinate.

"Do not search for grand phrases," says St. John Climacus; "often the babbling words of the tiny child, repeated over and over again, are the most acceptable to the Heavenly Father."

But if we are obliged to take up a book, let it be merely as an assistance to our personal activity; and when the soul is aroused, be careful to make some acts of real love which are our very own. And here we would point out that certain chapters in the fourth book of the "Imitation" and the Holy Gospels are especially full of suggestions, and particularly the Sermon on the Mount and the discourse after the Last Supper.

St. Cecilia, in common with many of the early Christians, always carried the book of the Gospels about with her, and often opened

it that she might learn to know more fully and love more dearly her Divine Spouse. We like to represent her, after a long time of quiet recollection, opening her familiar treasure; then giving herself up again to meditation and fervent affections—like the dove which takes a drop of water from the brook and slowly swallows it before drinking again. By this means we see Jesus as the Apostles saw Him, and hear Him speak as they did. It is an excellent practice, and closely resembles the method which we shall explain in the following chapter, and it is above all the Gospel brought into daily use.

CHAPTER VI

METHOD OF CONTEMPLATION OF MYSTERIES

THE word "contemplation" is used here in the sense employed by St. Ignatius in the "Exercises," where he says: "To contemplate is to fix our eyes on the object, slowly and carefully taking it in, in all its parts."* Now, there is no more profitable method than to represent vividly one of the mysteries of the life of Our Lord, as if we were present, and to make it the setting of our Communion

Before approaching the altar-rail, we employ our memory and imagination to

* De Maumigny, Book I.

recall to mind one of the events of the Gospel. We take up our position as if we were a spectator, a hearer, or even one of the actors in it, as the case may be. The scene unfolds before us: Holy Communion is the moment when the Divine Saviour enters; then we endeavour as well as we can to produce the sentiments suggested by His coming, by His words, or His actions.

A few examples will make this clear. At Christmas-time we can see the crib in our heart, which we have made ready as well as we can for His coming: this is the preparation for Communion. On our return from the Holy Table we find it no longer empty; the Infant Jesus is there, and we picture ourselves with the other inmates of Bethlehem, and try to join in the adoration of Our Lady, the admiration of St. Joseph, the joy of the Angels, the faith of the Shepherds.

St. Teresa liked to represent to herself St. Joseph leading Mary and searching vainly for a lodging at Bethlehem. And seeing them denied entrance, she cried: "Come to me, come into my heart!" With these sentiments she received the Sacred Host, then she fêted the Holy Family in the hostel of her heart.

At the Presentation in the Temple we can take the part of the old man Simeon, or of the prophetess Anna. Holy Communion will place Jesus in our arms, and we shall press His Heart against our own, while our lips

pronounce the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

We can also imagine scenes. Let us hear how St. Bonaventure encouraged his novices to adopt this method:

"Imagine," said the seraphic Doctor, "that you are making a visit to the Child Jesus in Egypt. . . . The Holy Child runs to meet you; He is so winning! You kneel down and kiss His feet, and then you open your arms; He will repose within them, and for a few seconds you will taste the sweetness of His embrace. Then He will speak. Perhaps you will hear Him say: 'We have received permission to return to Judea; we are leaving to-morrow. You have come exactly at the right moment; will you accompany us?' You will answer eagerly that you are delighted with His proposal; that your wish is to follow Him wherever He goes. . . . Then He will lead you to His Mother, and He will greet her lovingly and present you to her. You will bend the knee before her, and also make a reverence to St. Joseph, and take your rest beside them." "This way of making use of Our Lord," adds the holy Doctor, "may appear childish, but I assure you that it is a perfect means of nourishing our piety."*

* "Med. Life of Christ," xiii.

St. Francis of Sales, with no less charm, remarks: "We must make use of our imagination to assist us to entertain our Divine Guest. This can be done in different ways: the best is to picture to ourselves Our Lady and St. Joseph. What happiness and consolation was theirs when they carried Him in their arms, and clasped Him to their breast; when they kissed Him, and He put His arms round their neck! And then consider how in Holy Communion we resemble them, for Our Lord comes even closer to us than if He were kissing and embracing us." *

The mystery of Jesus lost and found at twelve years of age furnishes matter for an excellent thanksgiving; so does the Marriage at Cana, and here Our Lord may be begged, through the mediation of His Holy Mother, to change the water of our poor human nature into a generous wine. In this way we can go through all the Life of Our Lord, all the scenes of His Preaching, and of His Passion and Resurrection.

How easy it is to play the part of one of the Gospel characters: to impersonate Zaccheus descending from the sycamore-tree to do the honours of his house to Our Lord; or Nicodemus coming to ask for a remedy for his fears.

St. Francis of Sales continues: "Imagine that you are Mary Magdalene who searched

* "Entret. du Matin," xi.

everywhere for Him, at the house of Simon the leper, and in the garden; who wept while she said to Him Himself that He must show her the place where He had lain: 'Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him: and I will take Him away'" (St. John xx. 15). "Or," he adds (in his Letters), "remain in the posture of the Cananean woman. Say to Him: 'Yes, Lord, I am not worthy to eat the children's bread; I am like an ill-tempered dog because my hasty words snap at my neighbour; but if the dogs do not eat the loaves, the crumbs which fall from the table are not refused them.'"

We can also make use of the Parables. When we go to Holy Communion, we can imagine one day that we are a boat tossed to and fro by the storm, or a branch separated from the vine which desires to be grafted anew; on another we may think that we are the lost sheep, or the piece of money dropped in the dust, or the wounded man awaiting the passing of the good Samaritan, or the prodigal son taking his seat at his father's table, or one of the Virgins to whom were said the words: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him" (St. Matt. xxv. 6). Our thanksgiving will follow the same train of thought.

One of the most individual and most touching methods we can adopt is to take the part

of one of those who were miraculously cured. Before receiving Holy Communion, we may imagine that we are the blind man, the deaf and dumb man, the leper, the paralytic, the woman bowed to the earth, or the man with the withered hand—each of these maladies can be given a spiritual significance when we are approaching Our Lord. And after we have received Him, we can ask Him to cure us; then it is that we can thank Him for that recovery which to a notable degree is the fruit of every Communion.

Our morning meditation on a mystery of the life of Our Lord can often be utilized as a direct preparation for Holy Communion, and it is by no means the least advantage of this method of thanksgiving that it is admirably adapted to certain types of mind.

Finally, it is easy to make use of scenes from the Lives of the Saints. At our Communion on the first Friday we can try as far as possible to imitate the modesty and fervour of Blessed Margaret Mary, and during the time that we have the happiness of possessing Our Lord we can picture Him revealing to us His "all-loving and lovable Heart." Then we shall hear Him saying: "Behold this Heart which has so loved mankind, and in return It only receives indifference. You at least will give Me the pleasure of trying to make up for this ingratitude as far as you are able."

At the same time, we must see that these acts are made in all humility and respect, and that we do not take for visions what is merely the fruit of our own imagination.

The substance of this chapter might be summarized in these words of Father Lintelo: "In the first place, the soul should arouse her faith in the Real Presence, and try and realize the person of Our Lord, as Child, Doctor, Teacher, Wonder-Worker, as suffering on the Cross, or as revealing to us His Sacred Heart. No method is more efficacious as a means of throwing off the impressions made upon us by external things."*

* Triduum, Part II., iii.

BOOK II

THE METHOD OF MAKING THESE ACTS

PART I

ACTS ADDRESSED TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER VII

ACT OF ADORATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

We have now come to a method which is indicated in every book of piety—namely, the method of the acts after Communion. We shall devote several chapters to this subject, for we must clearly understand the importance and nature of each of these acts. In many cases one will be sufficient to occupy all the time of our thanksgiving. And finally, these acts, as we shall point out later on, need not be addressed only to Our Lord, but also, in union with Him, to God the Father, and to the Holy Ghost; therefore we shall have to present them successively under two very different aspects.

These acts may be grouped under seven different heads: Adoration, love, thanks-

giving, reparation, demand, oblation, and resolution of amendment.

Adoration.—The Eternal Word, in becoming man and humiliating Himself under the Sacred Species, has not ceased to be God. And in this meeting with a God our first act, as we have already said, should be to prostrate ourselves before Him, like Moses before the burning bush, like the Shepherds and the Magi before the Divine Child. But it is wise to make use of some considerations that will nourish our piety at this time. Adoration is the recognition of our nothingness in the presence of God's infinite greatness, and the affirmation of our absolute dependence upon our Creator and Sovereign Lord.

Adoration is the highest form of respect; it is the name which we give to respect when it has the Divine Majesty for its object. Jansenism has exaggerated it by extolling a respect which kills love. But we should fall into an equally deplorable excess if we allowed ourselves to be over-familiar, and so killed respect.

St. Thomas has indicated for us the just mean: "This Sacrament exacts a reverence made up of fear and love; but of these two sentiments, although adoration and respect should be there at the commencement, love should predominate and have the preference."

And it is not the Divinity only that is adorable, but also the Sacred Humanity. The Word, in taking to Himself the human

nature of the Virgin's Son, raised that nature to the honours of the Divinity, and was pleased to enrich it with all the attributes compatible with its condition as a creature. Every part of Our Divine Saviour is worthy of adoration. His holy Face is adorable, and His Sacred Wounds, and His Heart because It is hypostatically united to the person of the Word. The Heart of Jesus is so closely joined to the Divine Word that It becomes the Heart of God, and as such shares unreservedly in the Sovereign Majesty of God.

Jesus is God, and He has become our daily bread! Oh, what wonderful forgetfulness of His own dignity!

The deeper Our Lord's condescension towards us, the greater our duty to make up for His abasement by the honour that we pay Him. The Almighty has become a little Host which a breath can displace, the Most High has hidden His glory beneath the veil of the Sacred Species; this is the moment for us to render to Him the honour and glory which are His due.

When a King of his own free-will strips himself of his royal apparel so that his people may have access to him, is it not then that they should pay him their deepest homage? St. Louis left the palace of the Louvre and, like the father of his people, took up his seat under an oak-tree in the forest of Vincennes so that the poor and humble might venture

to come to him. What an indignity if one of his subjects had abused his great condescension by some lack of respect!

But there is yet another marvel. The King of Glory descends from the eternal hills to become man—how shall I express it?—to become a mouthful of bread for our consumption. And we, miserable things that we are, employ the time when He is so to say at our mercy, to forget His royalty, and to behave coldly towards Him, and even scorn Him. Such behaviour is abhorrent to the Church. For that reason she finds nothing too costly or too beautiful to be offered to the glory of the Holy Eucharist. Bring gold and precious stones; let the chalice, the ciborium, and the monstrance be masterpieces of the jeweller's art; let the priestly vestments be of the most sumptuous material; let architecture show all its art, sculpture and painting all their resources; let music invent some chant and some new instrument to harmonize with the deep-toned bells and the silvery chimes—nothing is too splendid to compensate in some small measure for the amazing humiliations of Jesus in the Sacred Host.*

In this way the Church teaches us our duty at the time when in Holy Communion our

" The first and finest Church vestment-makers in Lyons asked one another: 'Who is this little country priest that comes, poor as he is, asking for our most beautiful wares?' "—*Life of the Curé d'Ars.*

heart has become a temple: "Come, let us rejoice, and let us adore and prostrate ourselves before our God;" "for He is the Lord our God, and He has made us."

And then let us turn to those who are more worthy than we are—to the Saints, and the Blessed Virgin, and pray to them to help us to adore Him more worthily.

Our Lord, by frequent miracles, has shown us how pleasing to Him are the adorations of the Saints. Several times when St. Pascal Babylon was in the fields, the Angels carried the monstrance to him, so that he might adore Our Lord; and when his body was lying cold and stiff in the open coffin, on the day of his funeral, he was seen to open his eyes at the moment of the Consecration in the Mass of Requiem as a mark of respect. In similar circumstances the body of St. Catherine of Bologna rose up, and bent forward to adore the Blessed Sacrament.

Let us then unite our homage to that of the Saints, and especially to the adoration of Our Lady.

"Mary," said the venerable Father Eymard, "receiving the Word made flesh into her womb, is the best model for our thanksgiving. In union with Mary, to adore Jesus present in our heart, is the best means of giving Him a reception which will be pleasing to Him."*

* Second Series, p. 75.

CHAPTER VIII

HOMAGE TO CHRIST OUR KING

It was not only as the Son of God, but also as a King that the Incarnate Word was announced to Mary: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (St. Luke i. 31-33).

These words help us to understand in part the hidden motive which caused Our Lady, when she received the Word into her womb, to adore Him in the first place indeed as God, but then also as King. Can we do better, when this same Jesus comes to us, than imitate Mary?

The name of God expresses absolute dominion over all things; the title King designates in addition His sovereignty over mankind, both individually and collectively. It is true that man is the lord of creation, but the God-man is the King of the human race.

Jesus values this title of King; He puts it on the lips of His prophets; His preaching was directed towards the establishment of His kingdom. Before Pilate He declared

officially: "Thou sayest that I am a King. For this was I born, and for this cause I came into the world" (St. John xviii. 37). The title of King remained on the Cross notwithstanding the objections of the Jews, and St. Paul taught the early Christians to call Him "the king of ages, immortal" (1 Tim. i. 17). King of the Jews! Israel might protest in vain, Jesus was their King, not to dethrone Herod, but—if only they would have received Him—to give them even temporal prosperity. Loving Friend as He was, He held His country so dear that for a time He restricted His preaching to the people of His own nation: "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel" (St. Matt. xv. 24). And He made the Canaanean woman understand that the favours she exacted were, so to say, contraband.

When He was rejected by His own, He wept, and cried out from the bottom of His heart: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!" (St. Matt. xxiii. 37).

We see, then, that nothing is easier for the soul in her thanksgiving than to unite herself with the Sacred Heart in love and prayer for her country. Frequent Communion will be the means of inspiring us with a true sense of patriotism; because Christian patriot-

ism, as those who know the heathen can attest, is a higher virtue than anything of the same nature among pagans. The Christian nations, scattered as they are throughout different lands, form but one nation of souls. As Father Tesnière has so well remarked: "The Sacred Heart is the source whence we can obtain a supernatural love of our country. However noble, generous, and even heroic the natural sentiment may be when found in a chivalrous heart, in the case of a country that God has called to the height of a Christian destiny, something greater is needed. In order that we may be able worthily to serve this Divine ideal of our country, we must have a Divine faith and a Divine love." *

In Jesus the love of His country in no way hindered His love for all mankind, and He forms His communicants on this model. They must first let Him reign in their hearts. Jesus desires to be their King; but He will rule by love, not by force: "Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek" (St. Matt. xxi. 5).

He shows us not His sceptre of justice, but something which the Kings of this earth could not show—namely, His Sacred Heart.

He is King, but it is His Heart that He surrounds with the attributes of His royalty. Blessed Margaret Mary saw this royal Heart on a throne and encircled by a crown, and Jesus

* "Sacré Cœur," ii. 274.

said to her: "By My Heart I will reign, and My Heart shall reign in spite of Satan and his crew."

Let us join with Pope Leo XIII. and repeat three times the words of his consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart: "Be Thou our King! be Thou our King!" Let us substitute for the blasphemous words of the headstrong crowd: "We will not have this man to reign over us" (St. Luke xix. 14), the declaration of the Apostle St. Paul: "He must reign over us" (1 Cor. xv. 25).

We must try to make some compensation for the outrages which He suffered when He was robed as a mock King, and adore His Crown of Thorns, which has become a crown of glory. Like Esther at the feet of Assuerus, let us wait until He touches us with His sceptre of mercy, and we will say to Him with all our hearts: "Lord, My soul instead of being a palace is only a poor stable, but at least as its absolute Master Thou canst do with it what Thou wilt."

"The little fruit which our Communions produce," remarks St. Francis of Sales, "is due to the fact that we do not allow Our Lord to reign over us as in His goodness He desires. . . . We must subject all our powers and faculties to His Sacred Heart while He is within us."*

* "Vrays Entretiens," xviii.

It is by the Holy Eucharist in particular that He desires to establish His reign; He explained this to Blessed Margaret Mary, and it is to us as well as to her that He is speaking when he says: "Thou wilt come and receive Me in Holy Communion, and having placed Me on the throne of your heart, you will adore and prostrate yourself at My feet."*

We can imitate in spirit St. Teresa and St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, for both of them often adopted the same practice. St. Alphonsus used to imagine that his soul was in an immense reception-room, where stood two thrones: one occupied by Our Lord, the other by His Holy Mother. Prostrate at Their feet, he repeated three times the *Glory be to the Father* and meditated on the words of the *Te Deum*: "Full are the heavens and the earth of the majesty of Thy glory."

As has been already said, the deeper the condescension of a Sovereign to his subjects, the greater their duty to exalt him. Now, can we conceive an abasement which is comparable to that of Jesus the King? In order to satisfy the desire of His Heart to be united to us, He buries His Majesty beneath the winding-sheet of the Sacramental Species, and strips Himself of His glory. It is for us to pay Him homage in return. "Let us adore Christ the King in the Sacrament of His love;" these are the opening words of the

* "Life and Works," Book I., p. 84.

night-offices of the Feast of Corpus Christi; and St. Thomas continues: "Let us adore Christ the King, and Ruler of all nations."

Do not let us omit to salute the Sacred Heart as the head of the family and of the human race. Let us desire, and as far as lies in our power endeavour, to realize His reign over our homes and our country. Whence comes the social crisis amongst us if not from the fact that the revolution has expelled Christ from our institutions and from our legislation? It is for us to proclaim His rights, and to labour with all our strength to establish His spiritual dominion.

In the year 1911 the Belgian Episcopate, in a collective pastoral, expressed their firm faith in the all-powerful intervention of Our Divine Lord in the life of the nation, and called upon the whole country to offer a national homage of trust and reparation to the spiritual royalty of Christ. Masses, Communions, and public adorations were demanded for *the welfare of the nation*. May we not believe that the magnificent result of the elections of June, 1912, was a response to the eagerness with which the Catholics followed the invitation of their pastors, and acknowledged themselves to be the subjects of Christ, the King? Whatever may be the form of government adopted by a nation, no State can rest on a stable basis, unless it has the rights of Christ and His Church as

the ground of its very constitution. To France belongs the prestige of having been the first country to be called upon to render public honour to the Sacred Heart. May she make a worthy response. It would seem as if Our Lord desired to remind her of the superscription and, so to say, fundamental tenet of the Salic law which was set up by her earliest Kings: "Long live Christ who loves the Franks!" And the true signification of the words, "Christ Who loves," is none other than the Sacred Heart! The idea is contained in the phrase, only the title is lacking. The devotion to Jesus, our love—that is to say, to the Sacred Heart—is, as we have seen, the basis of the constitution of the French nation.

Moreover, all nations are called to this Christian destiny. Let every Catholic who loves his country use his influence to spread throughout the land the kingdom of Christ. And where can the good citizen find the inspiration and energy necessary for the accomplishment of this grand work if not in frequent contact with the Sacred Heart in Holy Communion?

By our prayers and earnest desires let us hasten on the coming of His reign over all the nations of the earth, and cry in the words of the Psalmist: "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people" (Ps. cxvii. 1).

CHAPTER IX

ACTS OF LOVE ADDRESSED TO OUR LORD

THE Angelic Doctor of the Eucharist declares that this Sacrament is of its essence the Sacrament of love; its end is to communicate both actual and habitual charity.* Jesus comes to us as it were to provoke us to love Him: "The charity of Christ urges us" (2 Cor. v. 14). To correspond by acts of love to this most loving stimulus is therefore an essential part of every well-made thanksgiving, as will soon be proved. In this short chapter we have to select among a number of motives which may excite us to Divine love the one which can best attain this result; and that is the manifestation which Our Lord in these latter days has made of His Sacred Heart. We will study the origin and development of this mysterious revelation.

The origin is recounted by Blessed Margaret Mary to Father Croiset in these words: "There was shown to me a Heart all on fire, and I heard the words, 'If only thou knewest how I yearn to make all men love Me! I thirst, I am consumed with the longing to be loved by all men';" and again: "He made me understand that it was this burning

* Q. LXXIX., A. 4.

desire which caused Him to manifest His Sacred Heart." *

On another occasion Our Lord said to her: "I have a burning thirst to be loved in the Blessed Sacrament, and there is hardly a person who will assuage it by making Me some return."† And He showed her His Heart surrounded by the emblems of His Passion. Calvary and the Holy Eucharist always go hand in hand.

The first *Sitio* "I thirst," was said on Golgotha; the second, no less intense, comes from the Tabernacle. This furnace of charity —the Sacred Heart—enclosed within the Sacred Species, is consumed by the flames of Divine love. His desire to be loved is so keen that He terms it a thirst; and He complains that in return He is betrayed and abandoned by mankind.

He therefore calls upon His infinite wisdom to find some remedy for this sad state of affairs, and searches for some fresh means by which He can make men understand how much He loves them. He chooses language conformable to their nature, for at all costs He wishes to be understood.

Let us try very respectfully to interpret His sentiments. It is as if He said to Himself: 'The Eucharist is indeed the supreme effort of My love; men are only indifferent to It

* Bainvel, p. 188.
† Révél. de Dec., 1763.

because in It I am invisible. I must do something to draw their attention. For the future a special image shall be associated with the Holy Eucharist. And the one I shall choose shall both arrest their thoughts and show them what is contained in this Sacrament and whence It comes. They are accustomed to look on the heart as the symbol of love; I will adopt this figure. In this Eucharistic symbol I shall place My heart of flesh and blood. They will see It sometimes in My breast, sometimes in My hand; It will attract their gaze, while their ears shall hear My voice crying to them: 'Behold this Heart which has loved men so much!'

"Men are accustomed to express love by means of a heart pierced with an arrow. I will use this emblem, and I will represent My Heart pierced by the lance. The visible wound is a type of the invisible wound caused by love. ('Office of the Sacred Heart.')

"My Gospel speaks of the tears which I shed over the faithless city of Jerusalem—that is to say, over all rebellious and ungrateful sinners. Men do not heed those tears, but if they saw tears of blood flowing from My Heart they could not remain untouched."

Let us continue this imaginary discourse of the Divine Master "resolved to convert souls."* "In past ages I have placed the

* Bainvel, p. 188.

Cross upon the tabernacle as a means of demonstrating My love in the Passion. This sign no longer makes any impression; I will not remove it, but I will add to it by showing to them the Cross planted in My Heart.

"When they look at the Crucifix they could imagine that I was kept there by the nails against My will; My free choice was not sufficiently apparent. 'Behold another symbol!' (Leo XIII., Encyc.). The sight of the Cross planted in My Heart will force them to remember the words of the prophet: 'He was offered because it was His own will' (Isa. liii. 7).

"I will add the crown of thorns to the picture, to remind them by what humiliations and what sufferings the King of Heaven abased Himself, in order to become the King of their hearts.

"Another custom which men have adopted will assist Me to make Myself understood by them. When a King dies a sudden death, it is usual to make a post-mortem examination to find out the cause of his decease. The same shall be done on My body. On Calvary I willed that My side should be pierced to show that My death was caused by the wound of love in My heart. But this seems insufficient since it leaves men indifferent; I must begin again in a more striking way.

"Through the wound in My side I will

show them My Sacred Heart, opened wide before their eyes and saying: 'Gaze and consider; once again the visible reveals to you the invisible wound, that wound of love which led Me to sacrifice Myself for you on the Cross, and to hide Myself for you in the Bread of Life.'"

And Jesus asks: "Whether before such a spectacle men can remain insensible?" "In truth," He adds, "it is impossible. Nevertheless I will enrich this picture with yet one other emblem. My Divine Heart so yearns with love for men that it cannot contain the flames of charity which burn within It."*

"I will therefore represent My Heart surrounded on all sides by living flames, as a symbol of the impetuous nature of Its human love and of the eternal charity of the Divine Word Who gives It life.

"There is yet something further that I can do. I will adopt a language which you can understand, which is your own. Do you not speak of your heart as being on fire? So the fire which shall come from My Heart shall teach you how intense is My love for you."

Such, as far as our feeble imagination can depict it, is the ineffable revelation of the Sacred Heart. And now that we have realized what it is, what is there left for us to say, but: "It is too much, Lord, it is too much!" We are forced to understand; the proofs are more

* Bainvel, "La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur," p 21.

than sufficient. "We believe in Thy love; we can no longer doubt Thy tenderness for us" (*Sic nos amantem, quis non redamaret*).

The Curé d'Ars had good reason to repeat so often these words: "My dear children, if we knew how much the Sacred Heart of Jesus loves us, we should die of joy." And he recounts this story of St. Clare: "'My sweet Master,' she cried, 'I long to love Thee, but my heart is too small.' And immediately she saw coming towards her a large Heart all on fire, and a voice said to her: 'Now thou canst love Me as much as thou dost wish;' and her soul was inundated with love."

This great Heart, which comes to supply for our powerlessness to love Our Lord, is the Heart of the Incarnate Word which we receive in Holy Communion.

In these considerations of the motives which caused Our Lord to reveal to us His Sacred Heart there is one point that must not be omitted. On our part He demands something more than a selfish, timid love that is afraid to show itself. He asks for a love that is demonstrative, which, leaving the inner recesses of the soul, bursts forth and dares openly to give Him glory. On whom does He promise to pour forth the profusion of His Divine treasures? Blessed Margaret Mary tells us: "On all those who are willing to render and procure for Him all the love,

glory, and honour in their power."* He has, then, as great a thirst that men should give Him glory as that they should love Him. He challenges them to love Him sufficiently to be willing publicly to sing His praises. He desires that through our efforts His love may shine like the sun before the eyes of the entire human race; so that in the latter days, notwithstanding the anger of Satan, He may enjoy so splendid a triumph on earth that it may be a prelude to that which awaits Him in eternity.

"Holy Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son by the manifestation of Thy love to the whole world."

"O Sacred Heart, procure for Thyself Thy glory on this earth."

"Most Glorious Heart of Jesus, reign for ever over us!"†

CHAPTER X

ACTS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

THE story of the healing of the ten lepers by the wayside shows us how highly Our Lord esteems the virtue of gratitude. Only one of the ten returned to give thanks. The Divine Benefactor was deeply grieved, the more so

* Bainvel, "La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur de Jesus," p. 189.

† One hundred days' indulgence (accorded by the Archbishop of Aix, January 11, 1913).

because they belonged to God's chosen nation. Thus Jesus shows how He expects that those who have received the most shall be the most grateful. When He asked Blessed Margaret Mary to adopt the practice of the Holy Hour, one of the motives He gave was that it would sweeten the bitterness which came from His abandonment by His Apostles; He explained that the ingratitude of men was the most bitter portion of His chalice.

" Behold," he cried in a celebrated apparition, " this Heart which has so loved men! . . . And in return I receive from the greater part only ingratitude. But that which grieves Me still more is that it is those hearts that are consecrated to Me that treat Me in this way." Jesus yearns for gratitude! Why does He prize it so highly? It has been said that it is out of charity for us, because He wishes that we should fulfil what is a duty on our part. Another reason is His desire that we should love Him, for the recognition of benefits received is the first step towards loving the benefactor.

These motives have their value, but there is another more simple and more compelling. Jesus prizes gratitude because it is His due, and is in the right order of things; because humility is not in opposition to this right order, because a heart such as His, which fulfils its proper function, holds to the

honour and glory which belong to It by right.

But then we see Our Lord in direct contradiction with His preaching? Did He not teach the love of humiliations and of ignominy? Did He not say: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you"? (St. Matt. v. 11).

The answer to this objection is not difficult. Our Lord is addressing the children of Adam, who are inclined to envy the transitory goods of this world, whose exaggerated self-esteem and spirit of rebellious independence exposes them to the risk of eternal damnation; He speaks to them as the physician who wishes to cure them. He shows them that the best preventive of pride and vanity is strenuously to cultivate the opposing virtues, and as long as they are on this earth they must endeavour to cultivate the love of humiliations and scorn. And in order to give them a further inducement to enter upon this narrow way, which is so repugnant to them, He Himself goes before them searching for ignominy, so that they may learn to accept humiliations. But this does not imply that glory *in itself* is not a good and enviable thing. Well-merited honour, provided it does not nourish our pride, is of value. Under these circumstances, when rightly accepted it is orderly, good, and harmonious. And, further, it is

a good so sublime that God, in His manifestations of the wonders of the creation, willed to reserve for Himself only this one thing; so pure that Our Lord proposes it repeatedly to His disciples as the goal of their noble ambition in that better world where they will be purified of all unbridled self-love. He desires that His own shall have large hearts, athirst for glory—the glory of Heaven.

Christ is God, equal to His Father, and as God He has a right to glory; He looks for it, He takes pleasure in it. It is not selfishness, it is strict justice. And Christ is Man, deified Man, and as such He merits Divine honour. By an impulse of goodness ineffable He spends Himself without measure to work our redemption; here He has a fresh claim upon our tribute of gratitude. On His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He showed that far from blaming the cheering multitude He encouraged them. Nor has there ever been any risk in His earthly, His Heavenly, or His Eucharistic Life that these transports should lead to any semblance of irreverence. The glory paid to Him as man He offers to His Father. It is for us, then, with full hearts to give Him the grateful homage which His royal Heart expects from us. To Him, the God-Man, we can say without fear: "It is truly meet and just . . . that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee."

When the motive of our gratitude is some great benefit received, then our thanksgiving should flow from the very bottom of our heart. What more touching proof of His goodness can He give us than this visit of the Sovereign Lord to His poor subject? How shall our gratitude be aroused if we remain unmoved by this royal banquet in which He Himself is the servant, of which He bears the expense, in which He brings to our souls the Bread of Life and the Wine of Sweetness, and to our bodies the germs of eternal life: "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15).

How this great King has abased Himself to come to us! Let us think of the glory He has laid aside in order to become our food; both human and Divine glory have vanished! No signs of His Divinity or His Humanity are visible, nothing human remains, only the form of bread! On Calvary Christ underwent physical death; now in order to become a thing to be consumed, He is condemned to be buried beneath the Sacred Species; He undergoes a mystic death which is ever renewed. It is in this state of abasement that we receive Him into our hearts; let us be on our guard lest by our negligence we on our part add to those humiliations which He suffered for our salvation.

Our redemption cost Him thirty-three

years of a life of suffering and obscurity. But for our sanctification many centuries of annihilation in the Blessed Sacrament have been necessary; and His love consented to this! It is enough, a thousand times enough! we cry. It is intolerable that we should add our ingratitude and our contempt to these many humiliations which Our Lord laid upon Himself. It is unbearable that we should abuse this goodness which keeps Him amongst us by ill-treating Him, or by showing Him only coldness or indifference. We will let these great thoughts penetrate into our minds.

In the life of Our Lord there are two distinct periods. The first is His mortal life, when He was subject to grief and outraged by men; it is heartbreaking to think of it, but our salvation required that it should be so, and He bore it all with joy. The second period is that which follows the Resurrection, and is essentially glorious. "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more" (Rom. vi. 9). The merit due to His Person and to His good works gives Him full right to a triumph without end: it was His own wish. When addressing His Father He used these words: "Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son" (St. John xvii. 1). The Father desired it also, and made answer to Him, saying: "Sit Thou at My right hand in glory."

In this second period we should expect to

find all humiliations at an end. Our Lord desires that they should be; He has a positive repulsion for them. In the Sacred Host, as in Heaven, it is His wish, and the wish of His Father that He should be glorified. His Eucharistic life should participate not in His suffering life, but in His life of glory.

In instituting the Blessed Sacrament He has fixed the outward marks of respect which are His due. He chose, not the stable of His birth, but a large, well-lit, furnished room. The Church has followed this lead. As we have already remarked, she finds nothing too sumptuous for the honour of the Sacred Host. She calls upon the transports of the language of oratory, the learned treatises of doctors of Divinity, the rhythm of poets, the musician's harmonies, and the pomp of liturgical services. She demands guards of honour, nocturnal adoration, immense assemblies of people, international congresses, and imposing processions. It would seem as if the words of the angelic Doctor were ever ringing in her ears: "Make every effort in your power; He will always remain far above the praises which are His due."

This is the Christian interpretation, this is the spirit which should inspire us when in Holy Communion we have Jesus within us.

If we refuse to pay this terrestrial honour to Jesus in the Eucharist, something is lacking to Him, there is a real deficit both in His

joy and in His actual glory; and if we treat Him with scorn and outrage, His Sacred Heart recoils with repulsion. Not only did He foresee all this ingratitude and feel its sting, but actually He thrust it from Him with horror. If He is no longer capable of feeling grief, the power of detestation remains; and even though He can no more suffer agony—this is impossible to Him—the feeling of repugnance is no less real to His Sacred Heart.*

We are now able to understand the reason why at times He reveals Himself in the Sacred Host as the Ecce Homo, or as shedding tears. We can understand the extreme bitterness of His complaint to Blessed Margaret Mary of the ingratitude and contempt with which He is treated at the present time.

At the present time. That means "in my glorious life, when I should expect only demonstrations of love and gratitude." Let us be among those who make Him a loyal and magnanimous return for all His goodness.

CHAPTER XI

ACTS OF REPARATION

THE love of Jesus, as manifested to Blessed Margaret Mary, is a love outraged and despised; hence the necessary part which re-

* Suau, "Sacré Cœur," p. 44.

paration has in the devotion to the Sacred Heart. But we must keep to our subject, and show how very fitting reparation is in our relations with Our Divine Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

Since He has become one of us, the Divine Master desires to be treated in the manner customary among men. It is the very least that He can expect of them.

Now, if one of our relations or friends is insulted, we are grieved, and endeavour to make some fitting amends by a visit or a letter which shall convey our sympathy; and the more closely we are attached to this person, the more keenly are we affected. Our sorrow is intense if it is our brother that has been ill-treated; if it is father, husband, or wife who has received the affront, then our grief has no bounds. But is not Jesus our Friend, our Brother, our Husband, and our Father ?

When it is a stranger who has affronted our own father, we are not so deeply affected; but if he has been ill-treated by a member of the family, all the brothers are heart-broken. They surround their father with loving attentions, so as to distract him from the thought of his grief. During the weeks which followed the departure of the prodigal son, we like to imagine the affectionate solicitude of the other brother towards the old father; and when we see Jesus, our Head,

coldly ignored and rejected by the greater number of His brethren, ought we not to act in the same way ?

There are yet other rules which govern the customs of daily life. The higher a person's rank, the more serious is any attack made upon him; and not only that, but the more serious the necessity of an act of reparation. We will quote some examples. When Louis XVI. was a prisoner in the Temple, he was often ill-treated by the municipal gaolers. Certain humbler persons knew that this was the moment to show marked respect to the unfortunate monarch, and, above all others, the members of the Royal Family and the old retainers redoubled their efforts to make amends for these miserable creatures by their protestations of loyalty and their secret attentions to the King. Is it not our duty to make amends to Our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, where He dwells a prisoner of love, stripped of His glory ? Nellie, the little Irish girl, grasped this fact at the early age of four years. Whenever there was Exposition, in spite of her sufferings, she was always happy. " Holy God has come out of His prison to-day," she said. " I must be taken to adore Him."

Let us consider the different grades of courtesy. If a friend or relative has been injured while performing some service for us, we are much upset. " He was coming to

see me," we cry, "when some wicked men attacked him. I shall be inconsolable until I am able to send him my condolences and have made some amends." Let us go a step higher. My obligation to offer my sympathy and desire to make reparation will be still greater if this friend knew beforehand that these men would set upon him, and yet freely and deliberately ran this risk in order to come to my assistance.

This is precisely what has taken place in the case of the greatest of all friends, Our Lord Jesus Christ. He foresaw in detail all the contempt, the outrages, the sacrileges, the profanations, that He would receive until the consummation of the world, if He established His Real Presence on this earth. Out of love for us, for me, He did not draw back. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end" (St. John xiii. 1). He pushed love to its extreme limit, so that He could nourish us by His Flesh and Blood, and that we might not be deprived of His life-giving visit to our souls. It is in order that I may have the happiness of possessing Him now in Holy Communion that, counting as nothing all these humiliations, this self-annihilation, He has placed Himself beneath the form of common food, and thus exposed Himself to such scorn and disdain. He would seem to say to us these words which were addressed to Blessed Margaret Mary: "Even if thou

hadst been alone in the world, I would have instituted the Blessed Sacrament for thee alone." It is not, then, a fortuitous chance that this triumphant King of Heaven has fallen so low as to be a prisoner without honour under a mouthful of bread: it is by His free choice, out of love for us. Oh, how dearly we should love Him, and make Him reparation, and suffer for the overwhelming ingratitude of mankind towards Him.

This burning desire to offer reparation so inflamed the beloved disciple of the Sacred Heart that she wrote: "What grieves me most is that I cannot take sufficient revenge on myself for the insults which Our Divine Saviour suffers in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar."* And on another occasion she remarks: "I can never find any suffering so intense as that of being unable to suffer enough. . . . It is a martyrdom to me to think that He is so little loved. . . . I would like to do some injury to myself and to all sinners because of our ingratitude towards Him." She was devoured by hunger of two different descriptions—the one for Holy Communion, the other for reparation. The words which Our Lord spoke to her in one of His visions were always in her ears: "Thou at least wilt give Me the consolation of making reparation for the ingratitude of men, as far as thou art able."

* Tesnière, "Sacré Cœur," ii., p. 637.

Our Lord desired that she should think of Him as *actually* in a suffering state, although His condition since His resurrection shields Him from all pain; and at Passiontide the Church acts in the same way. She forgets the lapse of time, and invites us to think of Our Lord as actually suffering and dying on the Cross for our sins.* Since Jesus really suffered for every offence before it was committed, what is more rational than to project this pain to the moment when the sin is committed ?

Sometimes the Divine Master offered Himself to His servant's gaze all torn and disfigured, and said to her: " I can find no one who will give Me shelter in this suffering state." This vision caused her great pain, and she offered Him her heart as a resting-place. " On one occasion," she said—" it was the time of carnival—He presented Himself to me after Holy Communion as the Ecce Homo bearing His Cross, and all covered with wounds, and said to me: 'Is there no one who will have compassion on Me in this pitiable state to which sinners have reduced Me, especially at the present time ?' "

One Friday, after she had received in Holy Communion a Host which had been used for Exposition, He said to her: " My daughter, I have come into this heart that I have given

* Consult on this point Franciosi, " Dévotion au Sacré Cœur," vii.

thee, in order that by its ardour thou mayest repair the insults I have received from those tepid and slothful souls who dishonour Me in the Blessed Sacrament." The humble and generous-minded virgin replied that she was willing to suffer all pains, even if they should endure until the end of the world. "My Lord and my God, if my life is of any use in order to repair these insults, although those which I have committed are a thousand times greater than these, here I am. I am ready. Do with me what Thou wilt."

Our Lord bade her go to Holy Communion on the Feast of the Sacred Heart as an act of reparation for the indignities He had received during the preceding octave, and also on the first Friday of every month "in reparation for the sins of the past month."

We have here sufficient proof of the joy with which our Divine Host will receive the acts of reparation which we offer to Him in our thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

CHAPTER XII

ACTS OF PETITION

St. Alphonsus Liguori tells us that, after Communion, Our Lord is within us as upon a throne of grace and mercy. "Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of

grace" (Heb. iv. 16). The customs of daily intercourse have shown us the varying grades which govern our acts of gratitude and our own desire to make amends: we can also learn from them something about our prayers. Since our Divine Guest is rich and powerful, and the object of His visit is to bestow on us His favours, we on our part must be generous in our requests. He addresses us in the words of His Gospel: "It is I; fear not" (St. John xxiv. 36). "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" (St. John xviii. 41). "Hitherto ye have not asked anything in My Name. Ask, and you shall receive" (St. John xvi. 24).

"Consider these Hands," says St. Bernardine. "They are so loaded with benefits that they are weighed down, so that He longs to unburden them. How shall I express myself? They are pierced so that His goodness flows forth almost in spite of Him, but not in spite of His Sacred Heart, which is open wide to shed them broadcast. Let us, then, ask with confidence."

And what shall we ask for—temporal or spiritual blessings? We may ask for both, though in a different way. Good breeding demands that we should make our different requests in the order of Our Lord's appreciation of His gifts. He puts in the first place our spiritual needs. He desires above all to save our souls, and to raise them to a high

place in glory. For that purpose He came down from Heaven, for that object He bore all His hardships; and if there had been only your soul to be saved, He would have died for you alone. Therefore, as He prizes so highly our sanctification, we shall grieve Him if we esteem the good things of this world more than the spiritual welfare of our souls.

Some persons seem to go to Holy Communion only as a preventive against temporal ills. Their piety is upset by illness, loss of money, dread of unsuccess, and humiliations; but if there is some temptation to overcome, a dangerous occasion to avoid, a bad habit to correct, a fault to conquer, they seem to count it as nothing, and do not even speak of it to their Divine Saviour. This is miserable and mean behaviour from an immortal soul.

To such persons Our Lord addresses these words: "Remember that above all I am your Saviour, and that therefore you ought first of all to ask Me for strength to avoid sin and to pardon injuries. Ask also for a taste for prayer, an appreciation of the Sacraments, advancement in virtue, progress in Divine love, and the gift of final perseverance which will unite you with Me for ever." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" (St. Matt. vi. 33).

Does this imply that the merciful Heart of Our Divine Guest is unmoved by our temporal misfortunes? Far from it. Everything that interests us interests Him also. He expects that we shall converse with Him heart to heart, and tell Him everything. Let us, then, speak to Him of our sufferings, our trials. The very familiarity of our confidences will please Him. In the lives of the Saints we find intimate, tender conversations which would scandalize the wise of this century. But Jesus approves of them. He delights in conversing with the poor and humble. Let us show Him our wounds in order that He may soothe them with His balm; let us talk to Him of our crosses, and if He does not see fit to remove them at once, He will pour down on them an unction which will make them bearable.

The one thing which He does not desire is that we should so exaggerate the accessory that we lose sight of the fundamental, and insist upon something which perhaps is harmful for us. In questions of health, fortune, material prosperity, He knows what is best, and He will not grant our request if He sees that it would be injurious to us. A father does not give his child the knife it wants; a mother, in spite of the lamentations of her son, will not remove the bandages which are so necessary for his cure. We can ask, but conditionally, and we must be ready

to give up our desire to Him Who loves us more than a mother. He will hear our prayer, but not always in the manner that we hope for at the moment.

We read in the life of the Curé d'Ars* that many prayers had been offered for the recovery of a young man who was dangerously ill. The holy Curé was asked to intercede for him. After some days, he received an intimation from Heaven, and said to the relatives: "God has sent this illness as a means of checking the evil life of this young man. If he is cured, he will continue his bad habits." "Then pray for his conversion," cried all the people. He readily consented, and soon the prayers which were being offered for the restoration of the man's bodily health were answered by a far more precious gift. The poor sufferer, transformed by grace, remained on his Cross, but he learned to love it, and became an angel of patience.

We must also show great detachment and submission to God's good pleasure in those requests for spiritual favours which are not necessary either for the salvation of our soul or for our spiritual perfection. Consolations, the making of pilgrimages, bodily health which will permit the performance of certain pious exercises, or the observing of the rule of community life, may be ardently desired:

* "P. Monin," ii.

by all means ask for these blessings, but let it be in the spirit of self-sacrifice. The Good Master knows the road He will choose for our spiritual salvation and perfection.

Even if there is some fault to be corrected, we must pray and wait in patience. The Divine Physician may see some good reason for delay. He explained this one day to a confidant of St. Gertrude who complained of the tenacity of certain spiritual infirmities. "These faults which burden our beloved Gertrude," He declared, "are very profitable to her. The graces that I bestow upon her soul are so abundant that, in order to keep her human frailty from attacks of vanity, I am obliged to hide them behind the clouds of these small failings." *

The subject-matter of our acts of petition should be the unreserved acceptance of God's good pleasure in our regard, patience, even joy, and a brave smile under suffering, this is what we should ask for, and without fail our request will be granted. Moreover, we ought to rise superior to ourselves, and not think only of our own necessities. We should enlarge our charity.

We should pray for the Pope, the Church, the clergy, for sinners, good works, for our country. Are we not Catholics? Therefore our prayer should extend to the whole universe. In the words of St. Paul to Timothy:

* Cros, "Cœur de St. Gertrude," p. 58.

"I desire first of all that supplications, prayers . . . be made by men for kings, and for all that are in high stations." "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved, . . . Who gave Himself a redemption for all" (St. Tim. ii. 1-4, 6). In our petitions to the Sacred Heart, let us follow the inspirations of Leo XIII., as shown in the prayers at the end of Mass, and in the act of consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart. Or, again, in the spirit of the Apostleship of Prayer we can pray for all the intentions for which Our Lord offers Himself upon our altars.

Having thus framed our requests in accordance with the desires of the Divine Heart, we shall be rewarded a hundredfold.

CHAPTER XIII

ACTS OF OBLATION AND GOOD RESOLUTIONS

THE act of Oblation is the necessary complement of the act of love. He who gives nothing is no true lover. The exchange of favours is of the very essence of friendship. Jesus comes as our Friend. He makes us a present, and we must give Him one in return under pain of refusing His friendship. He gives us Himself, whole and entire. The least we can do is to give Him our whole

being without reserve. He gives us His Sacred Heart, but at the same time He murmurs softly from the inner depth of our heart: "My child, give Me thy heart. None other gift but this will please Me."

It would seem that to love Jesus and to give Him our heart is the easiest thing in the world. Alas! this is not always the case. "It is easy enough to love ourselves, or what is much the same thing, to love certain persons for our own sakes to the exclusion of others, because they give us pleasure. Only this, far from meriting the name of love, is only selfishness." *

To break with self-love and come out of ourselves in order to love God alone, and all others for His sake, in this life will be always hard and painful in one way or another. The oblation and unreserved gift of self to Our Lord will always merit to be called a sacrifice. But this is no reason why a generous soul that has the Sacred Heart dwelling within her should draw back in alarm. Is it not the property of Holy Communion to give us the victory over self-love? For, since charity is the special effect produced by the Blessed Sacrament, its healing action is brought to bear upon that very wound of our fallen nature which leads us to destine all things for ourselves as their last end.

* Buathier, "Le Sacrifice."

Rodriguez, in "The Practice of Christian Perfection," desires that our thanksgiving after Holy Communion should consist principally in an act of generous conformity to the good pleasure of our Divine Master. He writes: "Let us place ourselves entirely in the hands of God, like clay to be moulded by the potter, so that He may dispose of us as He wills. Our Lord offered Himself on the Cross as a holocaust; in the Blessed Sacrament He gives Himself to us whole and entire. Is it not bare justice that we should offer ourselves unreservedly to Him? Here we have the full signification of the word Communion—to communicate ourselves to God as He communicates Himself to us. He communicates to us all that He has. We must do likewise, and communicate to Him all that we have. Let us make our offering in a generous spirit." *

The pious author continues by giving as a formula for our use these words from the Exercises of St. Ignatius: "Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am, all that I have, Thou hast given me, and I give it back to Thee, to be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure. Give me only Thy love and grace. With these I am rich enough." And he adds: "It is important not to make this offering merely in a general way, but to come down to the details

* Part VIII., chap. xii.

of the special occasions in which we find ourselves." The act of oblation should be completed by good resolutions, for love shows itself by works: sentiments that are not followed by actions should be distrusted. The Holy Eucharist is the bread of the Church Militant. The mark of a good Communion is not an abundance of noble thoughts or sensible sweetness, but the repression of bad habits, and a complete yet most joyous submission to the will of our Crucified Lord.

The Cross! we must always come back to it as the hall-mark of the highest love. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (St. Luke ix. 23). We are linked to our fellow-creatures by so many ties that must be broken; we must treat their allurements with scorn; but when Providence sends us suffering to aid us in our struggle towards detachment, we have soon had enough. No; the Cross will never disappear from our lives. Jesus comes to us in the Host, that He may give us the courage and the desire to be hosts with Him. Holy Communion is an integral part of the Holy Sacrifice of the altar and of the Cross. In it the communicant is made one with the Lamb that is offered.

Jesus, the Victim, urges us to become victims along with Him, and to immolate ourselves daily more and more on the altar of His Divine Heart. He brings us the strength we require: let us, then, give full

consent to the particular sacrifices He demands of us.

How eagerly the Saints entered upon this narrow way! Their example, while it stirs us up to greater generosity, makes us blush for our lukewarmness. Think of the vigour with which Blessed Margaret Mary offered herself up as a victim after Holy Communion. One day her Divine Guest said to her: "My daughter, I come to thee as the Sovereign Lord to offer sacrifice;" and her response was "an insatiable desire for Holy Communion and for suffering."

"On one occasion," she says, "He asked me after Holy Communion to renew the sacrifice of my liberty and my whole being, which I had made previously. I did so gladly." * She here alludes to the solemn and complete oblation of herself which she had made in writing to the Sacred Heart—that is, to the act of consecration. In her burning zeal, she urged all the friends of the Sacred Heart to adopt this practice, and to select for it the time of thanksgiving on the first Friday of the month, and frequently to renew it.

But let us use the very words of this Apostle of the Sacred Heart. Let her take up the pen; we will imagine that this letter addressed to Mère Soudeilles (November 3, 1684) is written to us:

"If you desire to live entirely for Our

* Bainvel, "La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur," p. 52.

Lord, and to attain perfection, you must make an entire and unreserved sacrifice of yourself to the Sacred Heart. You must will nothing but what He wills, love nothing but what He loves, move only by His inspiration, and take no step without asking His help and advice. All glory must be directed to Him, and we must thank Him for failure as for success, and remain always content without troubling about anything. Provided that His Divine Heart is pleased, is loved, and glorified, we must be content.

"Therefore, if you desire to be among the number of His friends, after Holy Communion on the first Friday of the month, you will make Him the offering of your whole self, and consecrate yourself entirely to Him, to render to Him and obtain for Him as far as lies in your power all possible love, honour, and glory. After which you will regard yourself as belonging and depending solely upon this adorable Heart. You will go to It in all your necessities, and as far as may be make your dwelling in It. He will repair whatever is imperfect in your actions, and sanctify what is good. . . . You will be the means of procuring great glory for Him if you let Him have His way. . . .

"Yours always in the love of His Sacred Heart, which transforms our hearts into His for time and for eternity." *

* Bainvel, *ibid.*

BOOK III

THE METHOD OF THE ACTS

PART II

ACTS ADDRESSED TO GOD THE FATHER

CHAPTER XIV

THE GOSPEL BASIS OF THESE ACTS TO GOD THE FATHER, AND TO THE HOLY TRINITY

We have already spoken of the different acts that should be made to Our Lord in thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Most books of piety do not indicate any other. It is a serious want. The principal *exploitation* of Our Lord, to use a term of St. Teresa's, has not yet been given. In point of fact, it consists in making use of Him present within us, to speak *by* Him, *with* Him, and *in* Him to God His Father, to the Holy Spirit, and in general to the Holy Trinity.

It is true that to render to Our Lord the homage that is His due is a very necessary part of our religion, but Our Divine Master has declared over and over again that we

must go further, and glorify the Father through Him, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (St. John xiv. 13). It is the object of His mission, it is the wish of His Father; and from the words addressed to the Samaritan woman we know that "the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father also seeketh such to adore Him" (St. John iv. 23). In the words of Monsignor Gay, Christ is "the perfect worshipper of His Father."

In this way we can make use of the Sacred Heart present within us to offer to the Father the same acts which we have learned to address to the Son. We can say: "I adore Thee, O Heavenly Father, by the Sacred Heart of Jesus Thy Son. I love Thee, I thank Thee, I ask pardon through this self-same Divine Heart. By Him and in Him I offer to Thee my petitions, and make to Thee the offering of my whole being."

As the Sacred Heart is the powerful means whereby our voices are enabled—and, indeed, ought—to reach the Most High, it would be a great spiritual loss not to make use of It for this purpose. We shall succeed in explaining this matter of such sublime import by adopting the allegorical phraseology of the Gospels.

"I am the way," says Our Lord (St. John xiv. 6); for as we have to come into touch with God, we require a road to lead us to

Him—a road which, starting from the creature, shall end at the Creator, and, leaving the region inhabited by creatures of nothing like ourselves, shall go direct into the sanctuary of God; in short, a path that runs from the pin-point which marks our dwelling-place on earth to the Heaven of Heavens, the Holy of Holies of the Divinity. Who will show us this road? No man, not even a genius, can do so. No engineer can apply his skill to build a bridge to span the gulf between time and eternity. "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and of earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent" (St. Luke x. 21). Not even an angel can penetrate into the bosom of the Divinity, and lead us there. It is necessary that one of the Three Persons should intervene; the Son made Man is the bridge which unites humanity to the Godhead, or, to put it more plainly, He is the *Way* which leads man up unto God: "I am the Way." "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me" (St. John xiv. 6). "No one knoweth . . . Who is the Father but the Son, and to Whom the Son will reveal Him" (St. Luke x. 22).

Here, then, we have the first purpose of the Incarnate Son, to serve as the Way to lead us to the Father. It is not enough, therefore, to fall down on our knees before Him in love and adoration; we must go

further and follow Him whither He leads; He must conduct us to the Father, and bring us into relationship with Him.

But Our Lord is more than the guide, our companion on our route: He it is Who will introduce us to the Father: "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me." Are not our sins the great obstacles which block the entrance to the royal palace? He takes them away. Do we need a password? He gives it to us in our faith. Do we require some characterisic mark, a sort of card of admission? He gives it us by impressing on us the baptismal character which testifies that we belong to the royal family as adopted sons. Does not etiquette demand some special court-dress? He gives us habitual grace in order that we may appear as clothed with Him. We can enter for He will admit us. As Joseph presented his brethren to Pharao, so Jesus introduces us to His Father. What position had the sons of Jacob in Egypt? They were strangers who were not even on the lowest rung of the social ladder, because they were citizens of a foreign country. If it had not been for their brother Joseph they would never have been admitted to court. And we, but for our Elder Brother could we ever have reached the Eternal Father?

At last we are within the palace gates.. We are famished, so we are taken first to the banqueting-hall. At the family table the

Father presides. Jesus gives Himself as our food. It is our duty to give thanks to Jesus our Living Bread, but we must also thank the Father who has given Him to us, after the example of Jesus Himself, when "He looked up to heaven and blessed them, and He broke" (St. Luke ix. 16).

But the reception does not end in the banqueting-hall. A curtain is lifted, and Jesus leads us into the inner chamber where the Family are assembled, that we may converse with Them. How shall we behave? What language shall we employ? Jesus alone can instruct us; in the words of St. Paul: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" (Rom. viii. 15.)

We next enter the throne-room, where God sits in majesty. What ceremonial ought we to follow? Shall we adore Him? But in what terms? Here again Jesus comes with us to be our Spokesman, and to put into words that which we are unable to express. "We have an advocate with the Father" (St. John ii. 1). With His mouth we can give utterance. He is the head of the family, and looks upon us as His members; but we are members who are capable of thinking, feeling, and speaking. So that although He is willing to be the Incarnate Word for us, He does not wish to be the only one to speak. He desires that we should say something which

shall come from our own innermost selves. He turns to us, and asks for our actions and words. "I do not want long speeches," He says, "but at least you can repeat some short phrases such as these: 'Our Father Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.'"

In this way our dear Lord takes upon Himself the burden of adapting and making fit our poor little prayer; but He asks that we on our part shall address some words to His Father. As at Cana He changed common water into the best of wine, so He will transform our faltering sentences into an offering of perfect praise; but, at least, He expects us to provide the water, that is some heartfelt ejaculations which, however short, will express our love and gratitude towards our common Father.

Do not let us fail in this and be guilty of the foolish mistake of those who say: "In my thanksgiving I am content with honouring Jesus as my Divine guest, and I am silent towards God His Father." Our Lord will answer in the words addressed to the Pharisees: "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me" (St. John viii. 16). Do not speak

only to Me, but make use of Me in your converse with the Divine Majesty.

In the Gospel we find a perfect model for our thanksgiving—that which Our Lord taught His Apostles after their First Communion. The name of the Father is mentioned in it nearly thirty times, and frequently also the Holy Spirit. Hitherto the Apostles had been accustomed to receive everything direct from Our Lord, and had never invoked the Father through the Son. The Divine Master chose this moment when He was dwelling within them to pronounce these solemn words: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 23). And joining example to precept, He made a long and sublime prayer to God His Father.

Can we wish for any more inspiring suggestions than these as to the manner of employing the time of thanksgiving after Holy Communion? Let us be docile to the teaching of the Gospel.

CHAPTER XV

THE LITURGICAL BASIS OF THESE ACTS TO GOD THE FATHER AND TO THE HOLY TRINITY

It is necessary that our piety should rest on a solid foundation. For this reason, and also to impress upon souls the importance

in Holy Communion of not only addressing Our Lord, but of speaking through Him to God the Father, it will be seen that not only the Gospels but also the liturgy of the Church urges us to this practice. In the Missal we find a liturgy of thanksgiving; it is short, but full of matter for thought. It will not be necessary to give it in detail, as this has been so admirably done already by Père Chaignon in the "Priest at the Altar." Our intention is merely to point out in it the clearly defined sequence which we should adopt in our colloquies after Holy Communion. Immediately after the celebrant has drained the chalice, he addresses two prayers to Our Lord. He asks that the temporal gift may become an eternal remedy, purify his soul and body from all stain of sin, and be a source of unending strength. In this way, after a short pause for adoration, the first moments are devoted to speaking direct to our Divine Guest.

Then, without further delay, the liturgy suggests to the priest that he should make use of Our Lord within him, to address the Heavenly Father. And in point of fact almost all the post-communions are addressed to the Father; and in them express mention is made of the Mediator through whom they are offered, in the words, "*through Jesus Christ Our Lord.*" Prayer to the Father through Jesus marks the second division in the act of thanksgiving.

The third part is indicated by the "*Placeat Tibi Sancta Trinitas*," a prayer addressed to the Holy Trinity through the mediation of Jesus, "through Jesus Christ Our Lord." We have reached the summit. And the hands of the celebrant, raised in benediction, are once more a supplication to the Holy Trinity. Is not this a delicate reminder that we ought not to end our thanksgiving without glorifying through Jesus, the three Divine Persons together?

To those who find too far-fetched this proposal that they should model the order of their acts of thanksgiving upon the sequence of prayers at the end of Mass, we would answer that the same idea is even more clearly indicated by the Church, in the prayers of the whole Mass, as can easily be proved.

We must not forget that the Communion is an integral part of the Holy Sacrifice; it forms one of the constituents of the Holy Sacrifice. And even when Communion is given to the faithful out of Mass, It does not lose its distinctive character: It is the participation, by means of eating, of the Sacrificial Victim. It follows therefore that the faithful soul who desires to adopt the best means of intercourse with the Divine Victim, who is given to her as food, cannot do better than to draw her inspirations from the language used by the Church in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Now, in the Mass it is a self-evident fact that recourse is made without ceasing to Jesus as the *Mediator* with God. It is true that prayers and homage offered direct to the God-made-man are not excluded, as can be proved by the *Agnus Dei*, and the prayers that follow; but a larger number are addressed to the Three Divine Persons through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

At times we speak to the Holy Trinity as in the Offertory: "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which we make to thee, in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

At another we pray to the Holy Spirit as in the *Veni Sanctificator :* or to both the Father and the Holy Spirit, as in the *nobis quoque peccatoribus*, where the priest says: "By Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory. For ever and ever."

More often when we make our acts of adoration, love, and petition, we address the Father through Jesus Christ: as in the Canon: *Te igitur Clementissime Pater, per Jesus Christum Filium Tuum ;* and also in the *Our Father* which is said with Jesus the Eldest Son, with whom all the adopted sons are joined together to speak to their common Father.

The Preface is chanted specially to God the

Father as a hymn of gratitude: "It is truly meet, just, and salutary, that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, eternal God." Nevertheless the liturgy takes care to state through whom she offers this act of thanksgiving: "Through Jesus Christ Our Lord." The rest of the Preface teaches us that this is the mode of prayer of the heavenly beings: "Through Christ Our Lord, through Whom the Angels praise Thy majesty, the Dominations adore, etc."

It is impossible to quote the whole of the Mass; but we can see for ourselves that all our petitions, for the Church, for the living and the dead, are addressed to our Heavenly Father by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the liturgy of the Holy Sacrifice, as in the Gospels, Jesus is presented to us principally as the *Mediator*, and it is in this capacity that He puts Himself at our disposal when He comes upon the altar of our hearts. "Jesus is the priest *par excellence*," says St. Thomas Aquinas.* As Priest and Mediator He is there to distribute the gifts of the Most High; as Priest and Pontiff He comes also to transmit our homage to God. In His Sacred Heart is effected every exchange that takes place between Heaven and earth. In coming to us in this His last sacerdotal act He does not cease to be a pontiff. And how can we be closely united to

* Q. XXII., A. 1.

Him in Holy Communion unless we also join in these sacerdotal acts, by which He interposes to present our offerings to His Father, and obtain benefits for us? Not to make use of His mediation at such a time would be to us a serious spiritual loss.

The governing principle in the act of thanksgiving, as in all religious rites, should be that which is insisted on by the Angelic Doctor—namely, "that Jesus is our High-Priest." *

It is true that this can only be considered obligatory in the case of public Eucharistic ceremonies; yet true piety has always loved to draw its inspirations from, and found its practices upon, the teachings of the liturgy.

It is this idea which underlies the method of assisting at Mass taught by St. Leonard of Port Maurice, in which the four ends of sacrifice are considered, and makes it so deserving of praise. We beg therefore that this method should be used at the time when by Holy Communion we are brought into closest communication with the Holy Mysteries. Then, especially, it is good to make use of our Mediator before the Divine Majesty, to offer for us our acts of adoration, gratitude, satisfaction, and petition.

Those who have a special devotion to the Sacred Heart will be glad to find the same advice in the writings of Blessed Margaret Mary: "When you have the happiness of

* III., Part XXII., A. 3

receiving this all-loving Heart," she writes, "you will offer It to the Eternal Father as your act of thanksgiving, to praise Him, thank Him, adore and love Him, and in reparation. We must unite all that we are to all that He is, and pray Him to satisfy for what is lacking." It was the custom of the holy Visitandine to keep herself in union with the act of perfect religious worship which is offered to God by the Sacred Heart of the great High-Priest. The four ends of sacrifice formed the motive-power of her life, which from one Communion to another seemed as if it were ever perpetuating the oblation of the Mass. She was always offering compensation to the Holy Trinity for the failings of our hearts, by going to the Sacred Heart, and drawing there from It all that we need.

Let us learn from the example of the holy Virgin of Paray-le-Monial, and above all from the liturgy, how to make these acts, and especially the act of adoration to God the Father, in the best possible way.

CHAPTER XVI

ACTS OF ADORATION TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

The Samaritan woman had good reason for rejoicing, for she had found the gift of God, the source of living water that could slake her

soul's thirst. The heart of man, says the prophet, is like ground without water. What good can it do unless it is made fruitful by grace? Now, after Holy Communion the Author Himself of all grace is therein, ready to bestow grace in the measure of our soul's capacity. The communicant, like a diligent gardener, far from remaining idle, must widen and build up the water-courses, and without a moment's delay let all the flower-garden and shrubbery have the benefit of these abundant waters. This quarter of an hour well spent is worth more than hours of exhausting labour during the rest of the day.

Yet we must also observe that the Samaritan woman was told that this water, more than all other water, was able to spring up on high unto life everlasting. By means of this symbolical and significant language we can understand the object which Our Lord has in view when He comes to us. It is not only in order that we may receive the outpourings of His gifts, but that He may find out a source of living water, which, pouring forth from within us, shall rise up to His Heavenly Father: "A fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting" (St. John iv. 14). He declares to the woman: "That His Father seeketh those that shall adore Him, in spirit and in truth" (*ibid.*, iv. 14). Could He put into plainer words the primary use of this spring of water which He has caused

to spring forth from our hearts? It must be a fount of adoring love, which, traversing the clouds, shall reach the throne of the Creator.

In truth, without the Sacred Heart, our hearts would be incapable of any real act of adoration; from the Heart of Jesus alone can flow a worship which is proportionate to the infinite Majesty of God.

The acts of homage and submission offered by the most worthy of created beings are, because they are offered by a creature, far less than what is due to God. But, on the other hand, when it is Jesus Who adores, the creature who annihilates himself before the Creator, being subsistent in the Person of the Word, is able to adore God in a manner worthy of His sovereign Majesty.

The Sacred Heart is the ineffable centre where Divinity and humanity meet, where adoration, without ceasing to be human, becomes Divine, and acquires an infinite value.

O Heart of Jesus, source whence proceeds unending worship, come to me, and make up for the weakness of my poor adoration! He comes; we receive Him in Holy Communion; and at that moment of all moments, His life becomes our life, His acts our acts. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth" (St. John iv. 23). We must not

neglect to unite with Him in this high office, and be among those who offer this true adoration. Many commentators see in these words an allusion to the Holy Spirit whose aid is necessary to set our adoration upon a supernatural basis. Thus this Divine Spirit will Himself be " the *gift of God,*" brought to us by Our Lord under the figure of the sparkling water.

Cornelius à Lapide remarks that if the water-supply of a valley is brought from a height, it will rise up again as high as its source. And this living water which flows from the mountain-top, is it not a type of the Holy Spirit Who with the Father and the Son inhabits the supreme heights of the Godhead ? The Son, first by His Incarnation, and after by coming down into each one of us especially in Holy Communion, brings with Him the Holy Ghost into this vale of our misery. Is it any wonder that the soul under the influence of this life-giving Spirit should experience transports which would be beyond the capacity of her poor human nature if left to its own powers ? Under the impulsion of the Holy Ghost within her, whose tendency is to rise up again to Heaven whence He came, she flies towards God, the one supreme Lovable and adorable God; she exhales the perfume of her adoration and longings in sighs which cannot be expressed to God, her last end. " For we know not what

we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. vii. 26). It is also by the virtue of the same Spirit given us by the Son, that we are able to adore worthily the Father by faith, while waiting for the vision face to face. And each visit of Our Lord brings to our soul fresh streams of water, which flow forth in a fountain of adoring love unto life eternal.

But it is through the union of our adoration with the adoration of Jesus, and in no other way, that the Holy Ghost would have us act. It is good, therefore, to continue to meditate upon the truth that, strictly speaking, Jesus alone is the true adorer of His Father.

To adore God is to recognize His infinite perfections, His absolute dominion over all beings created out of nothing, and an acknowledgment of His claim to be the last end of every man. Now to the human intelligence of Christ these truths were more comprehensible than they were to any created mind, human or angelic. To adore is also to follow up the knowledge of God, with offerings to testify our entire dependence upon His absolute Sovereignty. Now the will, or, in theological language, the affections of the Sacred Heart, are moved by transports inexpressible towards acts of worship by means of which the Divine justice can be fully satisfied. It is impossible in these

pages to go over all the different acts of humiliation which Jesus offered to His Father. But we will note that the moment when the Sacred Host is within us should be the occasion when we should love to contemplate with rapture the humiliations of the Holy Eucharist. Let us remember, then, that by becoming our bread, He sacrifices Himself as a real holocaust to the Divine Majesty. The words of consecration pronounced by the priest whereby He descends beneath the Sacred Species, are truly sacrificial. Not only do they consecrate, but they are like the knife that slays the victim. Ah! it is not difficult to understand how Jesus is immolated in the Host.

Where is now that voice that charmed the multitude, and raised the dead? It has been immolated; Jesus is silent. Where is that Face which in Heaven, where it shines like the sun, is the rapture of the elect? It is hidden behind a thick veil. Those eyes that shine "as a flame of fire" (Apoc. i. 14) are closed: they see us, but the benefit of their healing rays is lost; by hiding them away, Jesus sacrifices them.

"On the Cross the divinity is hidden," says St. Thomas, "but the human form remains; here all has disappeared, divinity and humanity: *hic latet et humanitas!*" On the Cross the Victim by His sighs, His words, and His last loud cry, showed still

some signs of life; here in the Sacramental state there is nothing to be seen, no beauty, no trace of His nobility—merely inert matter, and that is all. However glorious Christ may be in the Host, He is nevertheless a victim.

In Heaven His acts are all-powerful, prompt in their effects, and untrammelled in their scope; His authority is unopposed; His agility can overcome obstacles and bridge distances. In the Host He is without self-movement. Should a breath cast Him to the ground, He obeys the natural laws of gravity; He will suffer Himself to be carried along by any movement, whether it be the stream in the gutter, or the sweepings of the street. He offers no resistance to the action of the priest, who takes Him up, even when it is to place Him on the tongue of a Judas. He is like the sacrificial lamb, that has no freedom, but is man's property, that lets itself be taken, eaten, and consumed for his sustenance.

Annihilation! That is the state of Christ when He lies upon the altar, or in our souls. He is annihilated for two purposes: first, in order to be at our disposal; and, secondly, by His sacrifice to offer glory and worship to God His Father. And while He is within our heart, we must correspond with this double intention. We may, and it is His desire, that we should be nourished by Him.

But we must also enter into the other designs He has in view, and in union with Him, acknowledge the Sovereign dominion of God. He would draw all true worshippers of God into His Heart, that there they with Him may offer a common tribute of worship. We must lend our aid, and be united with Christ so as to be one with God; in the words of St. Paul: "You are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23).

"As Jesus belongs to you," says Father Chaignon, in his "Méditations Sacerdotales," "it is for you to make use of Him according to the intentions of God, and of Jesus Himself.... Offer Him to His Divine Father; what a tribute of worship you owe to His Majesty! If you had not Jesus, you would have good reason to be troubled at the thought of your own insufficiency. But He has been given you to supply all that is lacking. . . . See, within you is the Son of God . . . reduced to a point, and, as it were, annihilated. By this voluntary self-destruction He honours in a perfect manner the greatness of God. A God that disappears in the presence of a God, and, so to speak, puts Himself under His feet, renders to God an infinite honour that equals His Majesty. This is what Jesus is doing in you *at this very moment:* and so you must unite yourself with that God—the perfect adorer of His Father—and with all His acts of worship. By this union

you appropriate to yourself these acts which are of so excellent a quality, and offer to God the glory that He merits."

CHAPTER XVII

ACTS OF LOVE TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIS SON JESUS

An heroic missionary of the seventeenth century in Canada, Father Chaumonot, reached a high degree in the interior life by the use of this simple method. By means of extraordinary lights vouchsafed to him, he felt a keen happiness in contemplating the infinite love and honour rendered by the Heart of Jesus on His own and our behalf to His Father; and was favoured with transports of fervour.

He wrote to Blessed John Eudes, his compatriot: "More than forty-six years ago I was so impressed by the words of Our Lord: 'I honour My Father' (St. John viii. 49), that I made the resolution that from henceforward I would not love this Sweet Jesus for any motive of self-interest, but solely because of the infinite love and honour which He offered to His Divine Father. I cannot express the profit which my soul has derived from this practice. . . ." At Holy Mass, and especially after Holy Communion, He felt ineffable consolations, and his one

desire was to spread abroad the knowledge of this beautiful devotion.

It is much to be desired, dear readers, that we should try and arouse these same sentiments in ourselves. Why did Jesus love His Father so tenderly? Because He is His well-beloved Son. And have we not the same motive, since we are the adopted children of God, and are regenerated by His grace? We are, as St. John has said, "born of God" (St. John i. 13).

We will take our Elder Brother as our model in our intercouse with God the Father; and as we have the same Father as He has, we and He owe a common tribute of love. If we will penetrate into this fraternal Heart, we shall see there and admire the outpourings of filial piety, and be induced to imitate them.

How beautiful is this filial piety of Jesus! It was the mainspring of His whole life. To know love and adore was the ruling passion of His Sacred Heart, for His love was not only affective, it was also eager to manifest itself by signal acts. If we consider the mysteries of His Incarnation and Nativity as one complete whole, what do we find was His purpose? The angels will tell us in His place, for, as a little baby, He must keep silence. *Gloria in excelsis Deo,* they sing; this new-born Infant has but one desire—the glory of the Most High. At twelve years, when He can speak for Himself, He

makes this solemn statement to His Mother and St. Joseph and to the Doctors of the law: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (St. Luke ii. 49). Do you not know that I am entirely occupied with My Father's interests?

On many occasions in His public life He made the same profession: "I honour My Father. My Person has no other work to accomplish: to this object I devote all that I am, My whole life, human and divine."

See how He spends His time in teaching over and over again the truths of the goodness, lovableness, and infinite perfections of His Father: "None is good but one, that is God" (St. Mark x. 18); "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (St. Matt. vi. 32); "To love God with thy whole heart . . . this is the greatest and the first commandment" (St. Matt. xxii. 37, 38); "Be ye merciful, as your Heavenly Father also is merciful" (St. Luke vi. 36); "Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48): the whole of the Sermon on the Mount might be quoted.

When He is going to His sorrowful Passion, it is out of love for His Father: "But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I. Arise, let us go hence" (St. John xiv. 31). Hear this cry: "I love

My Father!" It comes from the bottom of His Heart; it is the motive-power which both gives the impetus to all His acts and controls them.

And when He is abandoned in the Garden, and on Calvary, should we not expect to hear some words of repugnance? There is a sigh, but it is accompanied by expressions of love and perfect submission: "Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (St. John xxiii. 46).

This generous and filial Heart had every right to say to His privileged sister of Paray-le-Monial: "You must offer Me to My Father as the sole object of His good pleasure;" and again to St. Mechtilde: "I am charged to supply by Myself and in Myself for all that is lacking in the creature." And the same words may be addressed with equal profit to each and every one of us.

Here, then, we have a method which He has given us, by which we can offer our acts of love to our common Father after Holy Communion, by taking the Sacred Heart of Jesus our Brother who is within us, and belongs to us; and *by It* we can love God the Father with a love worthy of His dignity and infinite perfections.

What could this poor little heart of ours do if it were to try, all alone, to love God with its own strength! The Saints felt their absolute powerlessness, and liked to repeat

frequently the words of the Psalmist: "Create a clean heart in me, O God" (Ps. l. 12). And many times wonderful favours were granted them in answer to their prayer: they received the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a sensible manner so that It might satisfy for the insufficiencies of their own hearts.

St. Gertrude, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Ludgarde, St. Michael, and other Saints and many holy persons, have seen Our Lord remove their poor heart from their breast and place therein His own, all on fire with Divine love.

A similar favour is recounted by Blessed Margaret Mary: "Once when I was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament . . . He asked me for my heart, which I immediately begged Him to take; and He placed it in His adorable Heart, where He showed it to me as a tiny atom which was being consumed in that burning furnace; then He drew it out again and it appeared like a heart-shaped flame, and He replaced it whence it had come, saying to me: 'Behold, my well-beloved, and see how I have placed in your side a spark of these living flames, as a precious sign of My love, that it may serve you as your heart.'" *

In these mystical revelations Our Lord wishes clearly to explain to us what takes place in every good Communion. Holy Communion is a meeting heart to heart, in which the one heart is exchanged for the

* Life by herself, vol. ii.

other, and they are fused together. Therefore it is quite allowable in our thanksgiving to use our imagination to picture a scene such as that which we have just described; we may imagine Jesus placing His Sacred Heart in our heart, or taking ours into His. Our most vivid and tender imaginations are fully justified by the inconceivable condescension of the God-Man who truly comes into our breast.

This excess of goodness on the part of the Father Who gives us the Son, and of the Son Who dwells within us, allows us to venture without presumption to adopt a custom established among men, to offer through Jesus to God His Father an expression of our filial piety.

The ancient patriarch Isaac, before blessing Jacob and giving him the privilege of the great promise, desired a kiss from him: "Come near me," he said, "and give me a kiss, my son" (Gen. xxvii. 26). And since God is in very truth our Father, He expects from us this mark of our respectful affection; and it is only fitting that well-bred children should give Him this every morning.

Alas! our lips are too sin-stained and too cold for this high office. But in Holy Communion the lips of Jesus are lent to us, for have we not received Him whole and entire? It is, then, by the lips of the Son in Whom the Father is well-pleased that we are able to

give this kiss of filial piety to the Heavenly Father: oh, what an ineffable privilege!

Would you like to know what Jesus desires? He wishes that men should come every day and take His Sacred Heart in Holy Communion and make use of It to offer their acts of love to God His Father. He desires that the hearts of all Christian people should be joined together, and concentrated into and fused with His, that they may form one Heart to love their common Father. The early Christians realized this wish of Our Lord's by going to Holy Communion every day. Finally, Jesus, this infinitely tender Son, not content with giving His Father the kiss of His eternal love, desires that all mankind should use His human lips to give to God day by day the kiss of perfect charity.

Let all Christians respond with all possible enthusiasm to this yearning appeal of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

CHAPTER XVIII

ACTS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

In the inspired words "Praise ye Him according to the multitude of his greatness" (Ps. cl. 2) the Holy Ghost lays down the

precept which should govern our acts of praise and thanksgiving. But who is able to carry out this command? How can we offer to God a fitting praise? How can we make our thanksgiving bear any proportion to His great benefits? Among these gifts is one of infinite value—the gift of His only-begotten Son. Is it possible for us to offer Him infinite thanks for this? "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?" (Ps. cxv. 3).

He will first call upon all the lower creation to praise God; they are enumerated in detail in the song of the three children in the fiery furnace which the Church places on the lips of the priest when he is making his thanksgiving after Mass: and is not man the poet who must lend to these inferior and irrational creatures the language of thanksgiving?

Thus we find St. Francis of Assisi singing the song of the sun, and calling upon all creatures to comfort his soul weighed down by the sense of its incapacity to praise God as it would.

Let us also call upon all rational creatures to praise God; and in union with the saints and angels, join with the Queen of Heaven in singing her *Magnificat*, the most beautiful hymn that has ever issued from human lips.

All that is good; all that is even necessary; but it is not enough. The harp that is

merely human lacks the chords which can sound a worthy pæan of praise to God. Come O Jesus! Thy Sacred Heart, O Lord, is the only fitting instrument for so high a function!

Blessed Henry Suso was accustomed to make a pause at the *Gratias Agamus* in the Preface in order that all things in Heaven and earth might join with him in magnifying God the Father, but it was of no use; the words of the *vere dignum et justum est*, which he pronounced with great fervour, would have been equally fruitless unless he had added, in the words of the liturgy, "*through Christ Our Lord*," for it is through Jesus Christ that we give thanks to God. In all ages man has felt the need of offering an uninterrupted hymn of praise to the Eternal Majesty, and it was in order to realize this desire for perpetual praise, this *Laus perennis*, that Princes founded monasteries where groups of monks and nuns should succeed one another in psalmody day and night. In the antiphons of the Sacred Heart we may find this never-ending praise.

How beautiful and easily comprehensible is that vision of St. Gertrude in which Our Lord showed her His Sacred Heart as a lyre on which were played all the harmonies of creation and all the hymns of the liturgy! "O wondrous lute!" cried Blessed John Eudes, "O Heart of Jesus, Thou art that

melodious harp which is the delight of the Holy Trinity!" David tuning his harp is in truth a type of the Messiah who uses His own most Sacred Heart as a harp on which to sing His songs of praise to His Father. We must follow His example at the moment when in Holy Communion this Sacred Heart is lent to us for a short time.

When there is a question of paying a compliment to some earthly magnate, innocency and dignity join together to render him honour. The first magistrate of the city makes a speech, and the fairest little children scatter flowers. In the Sacred Heart we find innocence and dignity united. Is not this the only human heart that in itself is innocent? for the Immaculate Heart of Mary derives its purity from Him. And since to honour God worthily a Divine Heart is required, is not this the only Heart that can fulfil this function?

St. Thomas remarks that another reason why the choice should fall upon the Sacred Heart is that the graces God has vouchsafed to us ought to return to their Author by the very route whereby they came. Since therefore, all graces come to us through Jesus Christ, it is through Him also that our acts of thanksgiving should be offered.

Jesus alone knows how worthy the Father is to be praised: "No one knoweth . . . Who the Father is but the Son" (St. Luke x. 22).

He alone, the omniscient One, knows the extent of the Divine favours. He alone is able to offer a full and sufficient tribute of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

The angels know this truth, for, in the words of the Preface, they praise God: "Through Christ Our Lord: by Whom the angels praise Thy majesty." From the first moment when at Bethlehem the tiny Heart of the Infant Jesus began to beat, they chanted their *Gloria in excelsis Deo.* Let us rejoice that there is now on earth a Heart that can offer adequate praise to God. Now, all mankind in union with the Angels can praise Thee and bless Thee, O Lord, according to Thy merits: *Laudamus te; benedicimus te.* Up to this moment we have been almost overwhelmed by the immensity of Thy glory, but henceforward we have something by which we can honour Thee as Thou dost deserve: *Glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam, Domine Deus . . Pater omnipotens.*

Certainly, when the Blessed Virgin or St. Joseph held this wonderful Child in their arms they were able to offer to the Father the perfect praise which flowed from the Heart of their Divine Nurseling: "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise" (Ps. viii. 3).

One day, when the Venerable Frances Farnese was feeling overwhelmed by the

weight of the Divine favours she had received, Our Lady appeared to her and placed the Divine Child in her arms, saying:

"Make use of Him, He alone can help you to pay your tribute."

What a grand lesson there is here for us all! Whether we deserve to praise or to thank God, let us receive Jesus, not like St. Stanislaus or St. Anthony of Padua into our arms, but into our hearts in Holy Communion, and present Him as a *Sacrifice of praise* to His Father. On three separate occasions the Gospel draws our attention to the acts of thanksgiving spoken by Jesus, which came from His Sacred Heart and were offered to the Divine Providence, Who was also His Heavenly Father. These were the multiplication of the loaves, the resurrection of Lazarus, and the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. And is it not as important to sing a hymn of praise to God the Father after each Communion as it was after the first breaking of Bread? Just as the Apostles had Our Lord then as the interpreter of their feelings, so we ought to make Him our mouthpiece also.

The early Christians were so convinced that the breaking and partaking of this Divine Bread was the great means of thanking God that they adopted the name of *Eucharist*, which means thanksgiving, in preference to all others.

At the risk of making this chapter a little

too long we cannot resist the pleasure of quoting a charming page from "St. Francis of Sales." In the fifth book of his "Treatise of the Love of God," the Saint, having compared the praises which men and angels vie with one another in offering to God, to a flock of all kinds of singing-birds—goldfinches, tits, larks, canaries, and linnets—imagines that all of a sudden the voice of the nightingale is heard, filling the air with his perfect melody. "Surely," he says, "he (man) would not hesitate to prefer that one song to all the rest combined; and so from the various praises offered up by all creation to their God, we turn to the praise of the Son of God as a praise far beyond all that the heart of man could conceive, and are overwhelmed by the sweetness of its melody."

Then the Saint tells how, when he was in Milan, he enjoyed the beautiful music in the churches. "But there was one monastery where we heard a nun's voice so incomparably sweet that it enchanted us more than all the rest put together, which seemed, however good, to serve merely to enhance that exquisite music. Even so, Théotime, among all human and angelic choirs we hear our Lady voice which renders a higher and fuller note of praise than all other creatures of God together. But even the praises this 'Mother of fair love' can give to the Divinity fall so far short of what God's infinite Goodness

deserves as to be out of all proportion thereto. But here we have the songs of praise offered by the Divine Son to His Father. How beautiful is this Well-Beloved among the Sons of men! How sweet is His voice, for the lips that speak have received the fulness of grace. . . . The Eternal Father accepts this tribute of praise with full satisfaction, because it is truly divine and of infinite worth. Oh, Théotime, if we saw Him as He is, we should die of love for Him. Oh, if we heard that Divine Heart singing the ineffable hymn of praise to the Godhead, what happiness it would be, how our hearts would burst their bounds, so as to hear it always! . . . How sweet it will be when our hearts united with His shall have their part in the praises which the well-beloved Son renders to His Eternal Father"!*

While waiting for this perfect union in Heaven, let us in Holy Communion begin on earth to praise our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ His Son.

CHAPTER XIX

ACTS OF REPARATION TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

We have already considered the necessity of making reparation for the insults offered to Our Lord; but every sin against the Son is

* "Treatise of the Love of God," Book V.

also an offence against the Father. And this is so because all sin, blasphemy, official atheism, idolatry, revolt, or pride, and the profanation of Sunday, are an attack upon the Sovereign Majesty of God. The Heart of Jesus, which knows of all these iniquities, is saddened by the outrage they do to the Father. How can we aspire to be one with Him if we do not try and enter into His feelings on this point? "For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). It is our duty, then, to make acts of reparation to God the Father.

The spirit of reparation to His Father is such an essential feature in His filial piety that it is the very motive of His Incarnation. Would Christ have become man if His Father's honour had not been outraged? Many theologians adopt the opinion of Duns Scotus and think that He would. But they all affirm that in the actual economy of things it was zeal for the outraged honour of His Father that made Him come down from Heaven. The Apostle St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, admits us to the secret conclave in Heaven, wherein the Incarnation was decided on. The Divine Word says to His Father that man cannot pay the debt demanded by His justice for their offences. "For it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away. . . . But a body Thou hast fitted to me. . . . Then,

said I, Behold I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 4, 5, 9). "Give me a body capable of suffering. Give me a human life that I can offer in sacrifice."

The Incarnation and all the humiliations of Bethlehem and Nazareth, all the fatigues of His preaching, the torments of His Passion and His abasement in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, are so many consequences of His devotion as Son to the Father, which found expression at the Heavenly council in the words: "Behold I come." On earth this zeal for the honour of His Father manifested itself sometimes in a Divine anger against all public sinners. Thus, He cursed the hypocritical Pharisees. At the sight of the sellers who were using the temple as a place for trading and usury, He made a whip of cords, and drove them forth, saying: "My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves" (St. Luke xix. 46).

As a general rule His zeal for reparation took another form. Placing Himself before the outrage done to the Divine Majesty, He abandoned Himself to an intense and measureless detestation of sin, so much so that His tender Heart, to quote the words of the prophet, was like an ocean of grief. He willed to receive Himself the chastisement due for our sins before the paternal honour could be restored. "*I honour My Father.*" "It is My work, and I

intend to take upon Myself all the sins of mankind. O Beloved Father, chastise Me instead of them, as though I were to blame for it all; I alone can offer Thee satisfaction. I submit without reserve to all that Thy justice may require. Look upon My Body and My Sacred Heart and see all that they are capable of suffering and spare Me not. Make a full and super-abundant satisfaction by Me."

This generous disposition sustained Him unto the end. His Sacred Heart was bruised, His Sacred flesh was torn; His human nature cried out: "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me." But His devotion to His Father made Him add the words: "Yet not My will, but Thine be done" (St. Luke xxii. 42). I will not refuse to drink the cup that Thou hast presented unto Me."

Ah! that chalice, can we ever realize what it meant? It overflows with Divine anger against the culprit man, with the shame due to sin and the chastisement of it, the torments, and betrayals, and abandonments, and ingratitude. The mere sight of this cup, filled our Lord with terror, horror, and a sadness unto death. In His agony He sweats blood. Yet He drinks it slowly, and of His own free will, to the very dregs, and the thought that sustains Him is expressed in the words, "*I honour My Father*," which was the firm resolve of His filial Heart. However

great the debt, He will repay it—"The honour of My Father shall receive reparation at My expense."

If only He had had the support of His Father: but no, this was denied Him. Nailed to the Cross, He suffers an entire abandonment. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (St. Matt. xxvii. 46). "Out of the depths I have cried to Thee" (Ps. xxix. 1). It is a cry from the very abyss of sorrow, but it has no note of revolt. He accepts this state of abandonment alike with all the rest of His Passion, and offers up all the acts of submission and reparation that His filial piety can devise, even to the *Consummatum est.*

When Our Lord was risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, He might have looked upon His work of reparation on earth as accomplished, and have contented Himself with presenting to God His Sacred Wounds as perpetual memorials of His Passion. But it is not so. In His love for His Father His Sacred Heart has yielded to the burning desire to add fresh humiliations to those He has already suffered for the greater glory of His Father.

Therefore He will continue to annihilate Himself before the Sovereign Majesty of God unto the end of the world. Every day and a thousand times a day at a sign from the priest He abandons His estate of God-Man

glorified and triumphant, and descends to earth once more, and takes the outward appearance of a worthless and lifeless thing. Thus sacrificing both the splendours of His Heavenly dwelling and all the external prerogatives of His glorious life, He envelops Himself with the white Host as with a winding-sheet, in a spirit of adoration and of reparation.

Let us unite ourselves with His intentions while He dwells in our hearts in this state of humiliation; and while not forgetting to thank Him for having become Bread for our nourishment, let us sympathize with this religious desire of His, through which He presents Himself before His Father in the attitude of a victim perpetually immolated.

On several occasions Blessed Margaret Mary was ordered to make use of Our Lord in this way in her thanksgiving after Holy Communion. "Present Me continually," Our Lord said to her, "to My Father, as a victim of love offered for the sins of the world, and as a sure rampart between His justice and sinners." On another occasion He said: "When I tell you that the Divine Justice is angered, you will come and receive Me in Holy Communion, and having set Me on the throne of your heart you will prostrate yourself and adore Me, and offer Me to the Eternal Father . . . to appease His just wrath, and touch His mercy."

These words will show to all who are zealous

for God's honour and the interests of sinners, what their duty is when they witness any terrible outrage against the Divine Majesty.

Of this nature are all crimes of a social character. In some countries revolutions still pursue their godless way. The name of God is excluded from all official speeches: it is ruled out of the school-books, and from public monuments, and erased from the coinage where the centuries-long trust in Providence had inscribed it. Its use is forbidden in the laws, and it is omitted from the formula for the taking of an oath. And, worst of all, when in the school, in the hospitals, the name of God escapes from the lips of a child, or some sick person, it is greeted with a smile of scepticism or a mocking laugh. His temples are profaned, are subjected to the indignity of having an inventory taken of their contents, and are despoiled thereof. He is expelled by law from His own house where henceforth He is only tolerated as an occupier without title. And if the free-thinker ever remembers His name, it is only to blaspheme it, and to mock at it. "God is not loved! God is not loved!" sobbed St. Francis of Assisi of old. To-day he would have to mourn with even deeper sorrow: "God is insulted! God is insulted!" And the sight of so many iniquities should make us also tremble. Let us enter into the desire of the Sacred Heart for

reparation, and try to understand that the words, " You shall come and receive Me in Holy Communion, . . . and you shall offer yourself to My Eternal Father to appease His just wrath," are addressed to us as surely as they were to His beloved daughter of Paray-le-Monial.

We must not omit to make reparation for our own sins, but must follow the practice of Blessed Margaret Mary, who tells us: " When I have committed a fault, and have inflicted on myself some penance as a punishment, I offer to the Heavenly Father one of the virtues of His Sacred Heart in payment for the outrage I have done Him."

In this respect we should conform to the advice of the Apostle St. John—" My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world " (1 St. John ii. 1, 2).

CHAPTER XX

PETITIONS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

THE present chapter contains for us a lesson of the highest importance. It does not come from the writer of this little volume, but falls

direct from the lips of that great Authority, our Divine Master. In His discourse after the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament. He was careful to say to His disciples: "Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full" (St. John xvi. 23, 24) Here is the secret of infallible petition—to ask the Father through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can we say that this has been our custom in our thanksgivings after Holy Communion? We address our prayers to Jesus, but perhaps we do not think sufficiently of speaking to the Father through Him. Our Lord will have good reason to say to us also: "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name: do this for the future and your petitions will be heard, and you will be filled with superabundant joys." And in this discourse He repeats the same injunction under a slightly different form: "I go to the Father, and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (*ibid.*, xiv. 13). It is as though He said: "I so highly esteem this mode of prayer to the Father—through the Son—that I promise that any petition made in this way, shall not go unanswered. The reason for my coming to earth is that the Father may be glorified by

His only-begotten Son. The honour of the Father demands that when you make use of Me to offer your prayers to Him they shall be well received."

Our Lord came to make known to us the Three Persons in one God. It is therefore His wish that we should address each of these Persons separately, as a means of deepening our faith. In the Gospel we see Him ever occupied with leading us to a clear knowledge of His Father: "Neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him" (St. Matt. xi. 27). And in order to impress this thought of the distinction of the Person of the Father from the Person of the Son, He bids us go to the Father again and again: Jesus knows how poor and needy we are, so He sends us to the Father, Who is the Author of all gifts.

He describes to us God's providence and goodness shed forth upon all creation. He it is that causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall; who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field; how much more ready will He be to concern Himself with the needs of mankind: not a hair of their heads shall fall without God's permission, for He is infinitely good and merciful.

It is in order that we may grow in the love of God, in confidence, and in filial devotion towards Him, that Our Lord desires

us to keep in union with Him by unceasing prayer.

He teaches us that the Father is always nigh to us, and that to find Him we have only to recollect ourselves: "But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee" (St. Matt. vi. 6).

But this Son, who yearns for our prayer to be answered, goes still further, and teaches us Himself how we should pray. Our first word should be "*Father*." "Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name" (St. Matt. vi. 9). He might have told us to say merely, "Father Who art in Heaven," but instead He wishes us to add the pronoun "*our*"; and why is this? This word has a deep significance, and the explanation may be found in the phrase: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 23).

Let us note that in point of fact this word "*our*" does not merely imply that it is fitting that several persons together should present themselves before the Father, but more especially that as we have a common Father with Jesus Christ, it is in union with Jesus our Brother that we should say: "Our Father." It is He, our Elder Brother, eternally begotten in His Divine nature, and

born of the Blessed Virgin in His human nature, Who permits us, the adopted children, boldly to offer our petitions to our common Father.

How sweetly this term of our brotherhood with Our Lord rings in our ears! St. Paul speaks of it when he says: "For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28). We have one heart and one soul with Jesus, and one tongue with which to praise the Father, and to pray to Him. It is when we receive this Sacrament of Love that this brotherly union reaches its highest point. What a happiness it is, then, to be able to say in union with Jesus, our Brother, "Our Father, hallowed be Thy name"!

If it were possible to find ourselves kneeling beside St. Francis of Assisi or the Curé d'Ars, and we could induce them to take part in our prayer and say it with us, how confident of success we should be! In thanksgiving after Communion, it is Jesus Himself, not some holy person, but He who is the Holy of Holies, who, present within us, joins in our prayers. We pray *by Him;* we pray *with Him,* and entering into His Sacred Heart as He enters into our hearts, we most truly pray *in Him.* Our prayer and His are fused together: the Father cannot now refuse to hear our petitions.

Let us not lose an instant of this audience which the Father grants to us for the sake of

His Beloved Son. We can ask for our daily bread, for the pardon of our offences, for victory over temptation, for deliverance from evil: but first of all let us join with Our Lord in prayer for the glory of Our Father and His. May His kingdom come through the conversion of sinners and heretics. May His name be known by the spread of the Gospel.

When Our Lord is within us, we can picture Him stretching forth His hand as formerly He did to His disciples, and showing us the face of the world under the symbol of a field where the waving corn is calling for the harvest? Can we not hear His voice saying: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into his harvest" (St. Matt. ix. 38).

We are told that the great Pope Pius IX. in his thanksgiving frequently liked to think of all the nations one after another, and to pray the Father of lights through the Sacred Heart to raise up in each country missionaries and saints in order that His kingdom might be extended there. And we should endeavour to arouse the same sentiments in our own hearts, and unite ourselves with the mind of the Church in the Collect she addresses to the Eternal Father in the Mass for the Propagation of the Faith: "O God, Who willest that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; send,

we beseech Thee, labourers into Thine harvest-field, and give them boldness to speak Thy word. May that word of Thine in all places be uttered and loudly proclaimed. so that all peoples may come to the knowledge of Thee, Who only art the true God, and of Him Whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ, thy Son, Our Lord. Amen."

CHAPTER XXI

PRAYER TO GOD THROUGH THE SACRED HEART

Is there any more efficacious method of prayer in our thanksgiving than to address God the Father through His Beloved Son? Far be it from us to dare to make such an assertion. There is only one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ Himself.

Nevertheless we can consider this office of mediator under several different aspects; and there is one that is so intimate, that it requires separate treatment. Everything in the Son which is a proof of His devotion to His Father can be used as an occasion for special supplication. We can present to God the Crown of Thorns, the Nails, the Five Wounds, the Holy Face. In ages past the Psalmist exclaimed: "Give ear, O God. Behold, O God of Jacob, our protector: and look upon the face of Thine anointed".

(Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 10). But in these latter times a more powerful method has been revealed to us. We can say with the Church in one of her prayers: "Look down, O Lord God, on the Heart of Jesus Thy Son." To pray through the Sacred Heart, with the Sacred Heart, and in the Sacred Heart, is the most efficacious of all prayers. We have learned the precious secret! It is as though our Heavenly Father had thrown us down from Heaven the key to His own Heart. Let us take it gladly, and while thanking Him warmly for it, let us make use of it.

Do we mean to assert that until now this secret remained unrevealed. But the lives of the Saints would prove the contrary. When St. Bernard kissed the wounded Side of Our Lord, he murmured: "I have found a Heart through which my prayer can be offered." But still, the devotion was not at that time very widely known. Above all, it had not received the sanction of Heaven from any explicit and formal promises. But the revelations of Paray-le-Monial opened up a new era. We have, as it were, a fresh advance on the part of Jesus, and of the merciful loving-kindness of God towards men.

The intervention of the Sacred Heart in our intercourse with God is of such an enormous advantage to us that it might be called, in the prophetic words of St. Francis of Sales, "a new Mediation between God and

man." * In this sense it is understood by Blessed Margaret Mary, who says: "The great desire Our Lord has that His Sacred Heart should be honoured . . . is in order that the effects of His redemption may be renewed in the souls of men, and to this end He makes of this Divine Heart a second Mediator between God and man."†

Many times in her letters she declares that those who adopt this devotion will receive all the assistance necessary to their state of life, relief in their labours, blessings on all their undertakings, consolation in sorrow, an abundance of spiritual graces, and the gift of final perseverance.

We know well how important a position Holy Communion holds in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore the time which follows our Communion is most suitable for adopting this practice. We can make use of it in our acts of adoration and love, thanksgiving, and reparation, and especially in our petitions. In and with the Sacred Heart we can find a new way of saying: "Our Father Who art in heaven." Symbolical language will help to make this clear to us.

God is in Heaven! What does this mean? In point of fact, God is not more present in Heaven than He is on earth, nor more above than below, since He is everywhere: but we

* Bainvel, "La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur," ii., vii.
† *Ibid.*

make use of this term of the highest Heaven to express the infinite distance there is between the Divine nature and our own.

And to follow up this thought: how is it possible for our prayer to bridge the immeasurable distance which separates us from the Most High? As a bow sends forth an arrow, so our heart may make its request; but this cannot reach its destination; of itself this poor, miserable heart of ours is not powerful enough for this. But the Sacred Heart also can be compared to a tightly stretched bow, which comes to aid our insufficiency.* From Its union with the Divinity it has an infinite power. In the intimate union which takes place in thanksgiving this Divine Heart is, as it were, placed beside our heart: how shall we express it? There are no longer two hearts, or two bows; the two hearts, His and ours, are but one to send up the petitions we desire to the Most High. Then all doubts as to whether our prayers have reached their goal, are at an end. They have received from this Divine bow a power to rise that has no limits; they can pierce the clouds and, coming direct from the Sacred Heart of the Son, they will reach the Heart of the Father who is in Heaven.

The Apostleship of Prayer, which is inspired by this idea that has just been

* Isa. xlix. 2.

explained, has popularized a wonderful picture of the Sacred Heart in prayer. The expression of the face and the hands raised to Heaven show how ardent are the flames of love which rise up from this Heart to God; and it is well to represent Jesus in this way in our hearts when He comes to us in Holy Communion.

At the same moment that He is in our breast He is also in Heaven. What is He doing in Heaven? St. Paul tells us that He is "always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). And since He is the same Person dwelling in us and in Heaven, His vital action in us cannot be different from His vital action in Heaven. Therefore, in Holy Communion we possess His prayer. We have only to take hold of it by our will and join our prayers to His as a brook becomes one with the onward-rushing river. And as the tributary does not remain distinct from the main stream which bears it along, so our prayers mingled with those offered by the Sacred Heart will be borne into the ocean of infinite goodness.

By the use of another symbol the Divine Master revealed this mystery in a sensible manner to St. Gertrude. He showed her His Sacred Heart under the emblem of a censer, from which clouds of sweet incense rose up to God the Father. The liturgical prayers, recited every day, He told her, were

mingled with that incense which gave them a delicious perfume.*

Blessed Margaret Mary used a no less beautiful comparison when she described the action of the Sacred Heart. "Choose this Heart as your oratory," she wrote. "Enter therein to say your prayers, that they may be pleasing to God. By making use of the prayer of Our Lord, you will have something to offer to God."

There is one more quotation that is so appropriate to the subject we are considering that it would be a pity to abridge it. One day Venerable Mary of the Incarnation wrote as follows to her director:

"You desire me to tell you about my religious practices. I own in all truth that I have only one which owes its inspiration to God Himself: it is the devotion to the Sacred Heart. For nearly thirty years I have practised it, and this is the reason. One day, when I was praying to the Eternal Father for the conversion of souls, I noticed that He did not answer me as usual; I did not know what to think, when an interior voice said to me: 'Make your petition through the Heart of My Son; by Him I will grant it to you.' This Divine inspiration produced such an effect upon my soul that I found myself drawn into the closest intimacy with this adorable Heart. I could no longer speak to

* Drive, "Les Litanies," p. 32.

the Father except through the Sacred Heart.... Since then I have always ended all my devotions in this way. This is the prayer which I offer with the greatest confidence to the Father: 'O Eternal Father, it is through the Heart of my Jesus, my truth, my way, and my life, that I draw near to Thee. By this Divine Heart I adore Thee for all those who never offer Thee any acts of adoration: I love Thee for all those who do not love Thee.... By this Sacred Heart I desire to make satisfaction for all the obligations of mankind.'" * And she closes with a fervent prayer for the conversion of sinners. Shall we not follow her example, and let all our requests pass through this Sacred Heart, which in Holy Communion is set within our heart; the Father will give them a glad welcome

CHAPTER XXII

ACTS OF OBLATION AND RESOLUTION TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

As children of our Father, we cannot give stronger proofs of our filial devotion than by making a humble and entire offering to Him of ourselves and all our powers, promising to use them and the gifts He has given us solely for His service. Jesus lays stress upon this

* Drive, "Les Litanies," p. 35.

point when He says: "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in Heaven, he is My brother, sister, and mother" (St. Matt. xii. 50). And in the same chapter in the Gospel He shows us how His Mother should serve us as our example. But it is He Himself who is the perfect model of this form of filial devotion. "In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do Thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of my heart" (Ps. xxxix. 8, 9).

These words of the Psalmist reveal one of the innermost secrets of the Sacred Heart. God's law is there as the centre of all things. Out of pure love, and at His own cost, He desires that it should be accomplished. His words to His Apostles are: "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (St. John v. 30). "My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me" (St. John iv. 34). He opened His earthly career with an outburst of filial submission: "Then said I, Behold I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 9). To Him He submits His intelligence and His powers of speech: "As the Father hath taught Me, these things I speak" (St. John viii. 28).

At the time when He dwelt in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and lay as a babe in the crib, it was the Father's will that He should keep silent; therefore, not a word would He say. What wonderful obedience!

When the shepherds brought their presents, did He say "Thank you"? When the Magi came from afar with their valuable gifts, does He say anything? Once more He does not; He is silent. As Bossuet expresses it, He observes the silence imposed on Him by God's law, and never will He be found lacking in this spirit of perfect obedience.

In the Host we find the same silence. How many supplications are made to Him, and He has His own way, sometimes obscure, sometimes easy to be understood, of answering them from the depths of our hearts, but never a word sounds in our ears. It is the Father's will that He should be speechless. He tells us so: "For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father Who sent Me, He gave Me commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (St. John xii. 49). He can also say of His actions and gestures: "I do nothing of Myself" (St. John viii. 28). The Father desires that He should rest immobile in the Sacred Host; therefore He remains there without any movement. Neither in His mortal life nor in His Eucharistic life is there one sign of revolt, of self-love, or of caprice. As man, Jesus has a will in entire conformity with the will of the Word to whom it is substantially united; but also the Word consubstantial with the Father has no other will but the will of the Father, so that Jesus can

say: "For I do always the things that please Him" (St. John viii. 29).

In all things—in rest or labour, in thirst or hunger, in heat or cold, in pain or pleasure—He always repeated what St. Gertrude calls the hymn of abandonment: "Yea, Father, since it is Thy good pleasure." St. Peter begged Him to withdraw from the Passion, but Our Lord rebuked Him severely; and when the over-ardent Apostle persisted in his pleading, He cried: "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (St. John xviii. 11). This meek Lamb became obedient unto death, and the most ignominious and cruel death—the death of the Cross. With a spontaneous and generous disposition He spoke of His oblation from the very beginning of His earthly life and unto the end; "He was offered because it was His own will" (Isa. liii. 7). He has the right to turn to His Father and say: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (St. John xvii. 4). He has also every right to turn to us and to urge us to follow Him in the way of a generous and willing oblation. Let us try to understand how, as our Head, He has an immense desire to see all His members make an offering of themselves in perfect obedience to the will of His Father and their Father.

This is one of the objects of His Sacramental visits in Holy Communion. Father

Tesnière explains this point: "Communion, as understood in its most intimate character, is more than a banquet. It is a spiritual sacrifice of our whole selves, by which we immolate ourselves to God by the hands of Jesus, who offers up the sacrifice. . . . In order to realize this, it is sufficient that Holy Communion should be an essential act of sacrifice. Every part of a sacrifice has the same primary and predominant object—namely, to give glory to God. . . . All share in its fundamental action, which is the immolation of the Sacred Victim by the hands of the Divine Priest," * that is to say, by Jesus the Victim and the One who offers sacrifice. In Holy Communion the communicant shares in the sacrifice. By his incorporation with Jesus, he takes part in it both as priest and victim. As victim, by his willingness to suffer and be immolated with Jesus, he puts his own self into the offering; as the one who offers the sacrifice, he shares in paying the supreme act of homage which the sacrifice renders to God.

During Holy Communion, on the one hand, the closer we are united to Jesus the High-Priest, the deeper is our sense of the importance of the honour due to the Heavenly Father; while, on the other, the more we try to realize in heart and will the entire sacrifice

* Tesnière, "Le Cœur de Jesus Christ," vol. ii., pp. 520, 521.

of self, the closer is our union to Jesus the Victim. We can become victims with Jesus for the glory of His Father by accepting the crosses sent us by Providence, and also, if we have the grace, by offering ourselves to bear suffering and humiliations. Let us enter courageously on this road; it is the royal way of sanctity. God knows our frailty and the assistance that He will give us. He will not overburden us. Away, then, with all hesitation, and all the reserves of self-love and sensuality. Let us dare to say with St. Francis Xavier and all the Saints a generous "Behold me, Lord!"

We remarked just now that all Christians are associated with the priesthood of Christ for the glory of the Father. Mary has a more intimate share, owing to her elevation to a higher degree of sanctity. We can think of her as fulfilling this priestly function on the day of her Presentation. Jesus is her beloved Child, her very own. She offers Him with a generous heart as a holocaust to the Divine Majesty, and thus forms a prelude to the offering she will make on Calvary. Let us also place ourselves first in the hands of Mary, and then in those of the High-Priest Jesus, and beg Him to offer us as a holocaust of praise to His Father and ours. We are so worthless, and so little assimilated by suffering to this great Victim, but nevertheless, if we are offered by these hands, we shal'

not fail to be acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

In His zeal for the honour of His Father, Jesus seeks not only for those who desire to associate themselves with His sacrifice, but also for generous souls to work with Him for the return of the prodigal son to his Father. He says to the communicant: "Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm" (Cant. vii. 6)—on thy heart for love, and on thine arm for action. Let us offer ourselves to labour for the apostolate of souls, each according to his vocation.

Above all, let us be practical in our self-oblation, and not content ourselves with barren, fruitless resolutions. Our Lord is careful to tell us that "he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (St. John xv. 5). So we must not be satisfied with resolutions that cannot be put into immediate practice. Let us not end our thanksgiving without making up our mind as to certain particular acts of self-sacrifice and good works which are to be carried out on that very day. This was the practice of Frederic Ozanam. On the day that Our Lord came to him as his Guest, he used to try and return the visit in the person of His poor. This was his invariable custom after His Pascal Communion.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON THESE ACTS TO GOD THE FATHER

It will now be advisable to try and search out the fundamental reason for these acts which we have been considering. It is to be found in the general economy of the Divine Goodness to whom these acts are addressed, both to draw down His benefits and in gratitude for them. This Goodness shows itself in two ways—by communication and by gratitude—and each is in perfect harmony with the other.

There is, first, the descending scale. Above *in altissimis*, unchangeable in His Infinite Majesty, sits the Eternal Father, the origin of all things. By the eternal begetting of the Word in the Bosom of the Holy Trinity, the Father, without any loss to Himself, lets the full stream of His goodness flow into the Person of His Son. On His side, the Word, in co-operation with the Holy Ghost, pours forth this stream of Divine goodness received from the Father upon the holy humanity of Jesus Christ. By uniting Himself personally to this man, He makes of him a God, and communicates to Him the fulness of the Divinity, so that the Son of the Virgin is in truth the Eternal Son of the Father.

But this stream of goodness that flows

from the Father does not stop in its course at Our Lord. Christ receives it in order to transmit it still further, but without the loss of any of it. He is a reservoir whose abundant waters must overflow on all His brethren of the human family. His human nature is the channel used by the Father as the means of communicating that Divine life of His which will make them also true sons, adopted and born of God, *ex Deo nati*. To this end Jesus unites them with His Sacred Flesh, that they may live the Divine life in the same way as He lives by His Father. "The bread that I will give you is My flesh for the life of the world. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (St. John vi. 52, 53).

It is true that the other Sacraments are also channels of grace, but they are all in relation to the Holy Eucharist, which is their end and their crown.

Let us follow this stream of Divine goodness which has its source in the Father, and which now, chiefly in Holy Communion, flows freely into our souls. Is it confined to the human race? No. In a certain degree all creatures feel its benefits, and are enriched by it. To the one it assigns some rôle in Divine worship, to another a place in the Sacramental rites, and on all it confers a supernatural dignity, since all things are for

the use of man, who from now henceforward is a sharer in the Divine nature. St. James tells us: "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (St. Jas. i. 17). Such is the wonderful method of the condescension of Divine Goodness. It seems to resemble an immense unchangeable glacier, that gradually melts and breaks into a magnificent river, which, without any decrease in volume, enriches innumerable pastures. Or, again, it is like the sun that sheds forth bright rays as brilliant as itself, which, without impoverishing it, spread light, heat, and life on all things.

But there is yet another symbol even more appropriate and expressive. Since the Sacred Heart is the centre of this harmonious whole, we can picture it to ourselves as having two movements—the one of inhalation, by which it draws to Itself all the goodness of the Father; the other of propulsion, by which It sheds this goodness on all men and on the universe at large.

To this law of descent corresponds another law—that of the return or gratitude. And this law works in an opposite direction; for St. Thomas says that all graces must be referred to their author by the route whereby they were transmitted.

Man must first call upon the universe to

glorify God. But how can we glorify God? By Jesus Christ, says St. Paul. "For you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23). The liturgy makes the same answer when she places the words of the *Benedicite*, "All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord," on the lips of the priest who bears Our Lord in his breast.

By referring the lower creation to ourselves, and ourselves to Jesus, we are able to satisfy their desire to render glory to God: "For we know that every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain even till now" (Rom. viii. 22).

But in the Person of Jesus Christ we can mount yet higher; for as it is our duty to surround His Sacred Humanity with love and respect when it is dwelling within us, so it is His intention that we should make use of it to rise higher unto His Divinity. "Christ is God and *Man*," says St. Augustine. "Make use of His Humanity as a path to lead you to God." We must join in the desire of the human Heart of Jesus to glorify the Word, and through and with the Word glorify the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost. This is the spirit of the closing lines of the prayer that precedes the *Our Father* in the Canon of the Mass.

But to return to our consideration of the Sacred Heart. The expressions which were adopted just now to signify the

descent of Divine Goodness can also be used for the ascending scale of gratitude. We can think of the Sacred Heart as the centre which draws to Itself all the elements of this ascension. Animated by the double movement of inhalation and propulsion, He calls to Himself all the praise and thanksgiving offered by man, so that He may raise them up on high to the Bosom of the Father.

In this way, by our union with Christ we are all co-ordinated towards our last end, and form one whole with our first beginning, which is none other than the Eternal Father. "I in them, and Thou in Me: that they may be perfect in one" (St. John xvii. 23). And when all the elect are finally made one with Our Lord, the end of time will come: and throughout eternity Christ triumphant will give to His Father the glory He has won for Him: "Afterwards the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father" (1 Cor. xxxv. 24). The chosen people will celebrate the glory both of the Lamb their Victim and their nourishment, and of Him who sitteth upon the throne, God the Father, to whom "be benediction and honour and glory and power for ever and ever" (Apoc. v. 13).

After this bird's-eye view of the subject we can realize once more how regrettable it is in our thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

to address our acts to Jesus Christ alone. Whether we are asking for benefits, or paying our homage, the harmony of the Divine plan demands that when we are in possession of Jesus, we should make use of Him to offer perfect honour to God His Father.

The beautiful words of St. Thomas, which have already been quoted in part, are most applicable in this connection: "The priestly function is pre-eminently appropriate to Christ." For a priest means someone who is a mediator between God and man. This is especially the office of Our Lord. And we do not understand the Sacred Heart, and Its place in the Divine economy, nor how to make use of Its treasures, if we only pay our acts of respect to It, and do not go to the Father by means of this same Divine Heart. Through Him our worship should rise up, and by Him the blessings of Heaven will be brought down to us.

CHAPTER XXIV

A SUMMARY OF THE ACTS TO GOD THE FATHER

It was stated in the Preface that the principal aim of this work was to induce communicants in their thanksgiving not to neglect to offer acts to God the Father and to the Holy Trinity, who are frequently designated either

by the name "Our Father," or simply as "God."

It will cause no surprise, then, to find this point insisted upon once more in this summary of the preceding chapters; for is not repetition the only effective way of teaching?

Our readers will pardon us for returning to this subject, and for collecting together for their use an abbreviated form of these acts to God the Father, which can easily be committed to memory.

The most abreviated form, which contains merely the skeleton of the idea, runs thus:

"Sacred Heart of my Jesus, by Thee, with Thee, and in Thee, I adore, I love, and I give thanks to God Thy Father, Who is also my Father; I unite my acts of reparation and my petitions to Thine; by Thy hands I offer myself to Him, and promise to Him and to Thee to put my resolutions into practice this very day."

At first we may make use of a still shorter formula. For example, we may say these words mentally, several times over, measuring their rhythm with each breath. Thus for our acts of adoration we can say: "Sacred Heart of my Jesus, by Thee, in Thee, with Thee, I adore God the Father." Then an act of love, and so on. After each word, during the breathing interval, we can think of the meaning of the words, and give them our full adhesion.

We must be careful to leave some moments for silence during which we can listen to the voice of Our Lord or of God the Father speaking to us from the depths of our heart.

With practice we shall be able, little by little, to amplify these acts. We shall gradually learn to adopt expressions similar to those given in this chapter in an abridged form, many of which are couched in that symbolical language so dear to the Saints, and which is so useful in aiding the affections and in fixing the imagination. These formulas are not intended to be used as vocal prayer or pious reading during the time of Thanksgiving, but merely as a model, a scheme of thought, which can be developed according to the inner leanings of the soul. Some such acts are given as examples.

Acts of Adoration.—O Heavenly Father, I adore Thee. But the Divine Heart of Thy Son Jesus is the golden censer by which my acts of adoration will reach unto Thee. St. John saw this censer, "full of odours which are the prayers of Saints" (Apoc. v. 8) No grains of incense will be acceptable to Thee unless they are mixed, blended, and consumed with that incense which burns in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. By this filial Heart accept the sweet odour of my adoration."

At this point we can also offer our heart in spirit to Jesus, in the same way as in the

Mass the deacon presents the censer to the priest, and begs Our Lord to put the Divine incense into our hearts.

Act of Love.—O Heavenly Father, infinitely lovable and source of all good things. From Thee the Divinity flows eternally into the Word; from the Word it is shed upon Jesus, and through Jesus a share comes to me and makes me in very truth Thy child. How can I love Thee enough? I unite with Jesus in offering my love to Thee. Now at this moment He creates in me that sparkling fountain of water which can rise up to the inaccessible heights where Thou dwellest. My aspirations rise up to Thee in unison with those of the Sacred Heart. O my God, with Jesus I venture with the deepest respect to call Thee Father, and with His lips I dare to give Thee the kiss of filial love.

Act of Thanksgiving.—O God, infinitely worthy of all glory and gratitude, the prophet-king sang of Thee on his harp. Where can I find a lyre that can harmoniously sound Thy praise? In the Sacred Heart of Jesus dwelling in me at this moment, I have found the lyre that I seek. I take up this wondrous instrument which the Holy Ghost has tuned so that I may be able to give Thee glory. By the Sacred Heart, with Mary and all the Angels and Saints, I sing my hymn of thanksgiving to Thee.

Act of Reparation.—O Heavenly Father,

many and great are our offences against Thee! How grossly Thy rights are violated by those erring children who have escaped from their Father's house and given themselves over to sin! Our tears are not sufficient to make expiation; an innocent and a Divine Blood is required. This Sacred Blood is mine, for It has been given to me as my drink this day. I offer It to Thee in reparation for the sins of all mankind, and in propitiation for my own offences.

Act of Demand.—Our Father, Thou lovest us, but yet Thou dwellest in the highest Heavens. Thy nature is infinitely above my poor human nature. How can my prayers, my aspirations, reach Thee? Ah! I have found out a way: if my petitions are like arrows that point towards Thy Heart, the Heart of Thy Son is the strong bow that will send them flying up to Thee. Through the Sacred Heart my petitions will rise up to Thee.

Act of Oblation.—My God, these gifts of Thine are of an infinite value, and return for them can only be made by the infinite. All that I am is nothing; myself and my powers are poor and miserable. But I have found a means whereby I can become an oblation of sweet-smelling savour unto Thee. I place myself in the hands of Thy Son, for they are mine By these Sacred Hands and by the Sacred Heart that directs their energy, I offer myself

to Thee—my will, my heart, and all my faculties. I will give Thee possession of myself, so that my whole being may belong solely to Thee. I desire to be but a little lamb, that I may be immolated with the Divine Lamb of God. I desire to be a tiny host, and to rest beside the Mighty Host upon the Altar. As Jesus lives in Thee, and by Thee, so I also seek to live only to love Thee and serve Thee.

It would be well at this point to recite the prayer of acceptance of death (see p. 223), to which Pope Pius X. has attached a precious indulgence. We can also renew any solemn promise or vow we have made.

Act of Resolution.—My God, I desire to show Thee the sincerity of my offering by putting into execution certain resolutions which I now lay before Thee. Of myself I am nothing but frailty, so that in order to accomplish this I count upon the strength of Jesus Christ Who has been given to me this morning.

Here the subject of the particular examen may be attended to.

Conclusion.—O Eternal Father, it is through Jesus Christ, God and Man, my Mediator and my Priest before Thee, that I offer to Thee my acts of thanksgiving. With Jesus I venture to address Thee. And, above all, it is by Jesus, by penetrating into His Sacred Heart, that I can render to Thee

all the worship that is Thy due. In return, and by this same Sacred Heart, I ask Thee for all Thy blessings. By Jesus, with Him, and in Him, to Thee, O Father Almighty, in union with the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory throughout all the ages.

BOOK IV

THE METHOD OF THE ACTS

PART III

SOME ADDITIONAL ACTS

CHAPTER XXV

ACTS TO THE HOLY GHOST

THE Third Person of the Holy Trinity has right to our homage as well as the other Two Persons. He also comes to us in Holy Communion, for is it not the special function of Our Lord to bring the Paraclete with Him, and to bestow Him upon us? Was not the sending of the Holy Ghost His special office? And when we have just been to Communion we have the power to say to Him those words of the Psalmist: "Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created: and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. ciii. 30).

In the Canticle of Canticles we read these words: "My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall . . . let thy voice sound in my ears" (Cant. ii. 14). Mystical writers understand this symbolical language to refer to the wound in the Side

of Our Lord. The wall scorched by the sun and shaken by the tempests, represents the Body of Our Lord that was so ill-treated in His Passion. The wound in His side made a deep cavity, thus His Sacred Heart is opened, and within It is found the white Dove, the Holy Ghost Whom Jesus came to bring into the world.

When we have received Holy Communion, we possess the Sacred Heart, and therefore we have this Divine Spirit dwelling within us: our part is to draw Him down into our hearts.

Perhaps we should like to lay our heads on Our Saviour's breast, after the example of St. Gertrude who one day, when she was repeating the *Veni Creator*, experienced great interior sweetness, and at each word received a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost. But rather we would beg the Divine Paraclete to come forth and brood over the surface of our heart, saying to Him: "Arise, make haste my dove, my beautiful one . . . let Thy voice sound in my ears" (Cant. ii. 10, 14). Then we shall see Him flying forth from the Sacred Heart, circle around the head of Our Lord with outspread wings. St. John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan saw Our Lord in prayer, and the Holy Ghost under the form of a dove hovering over Him, while the voice of the Father said: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (St. Matt. iii. 17).

We will take this occasion to glorify all the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, placing all our satisfaction in this same Trinity, and say: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

Then we can ask the Holy Ghost to penetrate into the depths of our heart. Did not St. Paul write these words to the Galatians: "God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Gal. iv. 6); and again to the Corinthians: "But he who is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17)? With deep respect for the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, we can more or less briefly, according to the time at our disposal, go over the different acts which we have already addressed to the Father and the Son, and offer them to the Holy Ghost.

For the Act of adoration we can picture the scene of the day of Pentecost. For the Act of Love, we can think of the Thanksgiving of St. Philip Neri, who one Whitsunday felt his heart beat so violently that two of his ribs were broken, yet he lived on another fifty years.

For the Act of Thanksgiving and Reparation we can recall to mind our Baptism and Confirmation, and express our sorrow that we have so rarely prayed to the Holy Ghost. Let us remember that according to several well-authenticated revelations (see Cornelius à Lapide) the Greeks have suffered rejection

because of their refusal to give to the Holy Ghost a glory equal to that of the other Two Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The Act of Petition is most important, for the gifts of the Holy Spirit are of the highest value. We can beg for each of them in turn. The gift of Wisdom, which sweetly unites us to God alone, after the manner of St. Francis of Assisi, when He cried: "My God, and my all!" The gift of Understanding which illuminates the truths of our religion, and is so vital in these days when so many dangerous errors are in the air. At a no less troublous period St. Ephrem saw a dove resting on the shoulder of St. Basil while he was preaching against the Arian heresy. The gift of Knowledge will aid us to make use of all the truths of the natural order to strengthen our faith and our trust in Divine Providence. The gift of Counsel awakens prudence in us. The gift of Strength that inspired the martyrs like St. Felicitas to say: "Fear not, that I shall betray my God! He has given me the courage to see all my seven sons put to death. Do you not know that I bear within me the Holy Ghost? He will not permit His servant to fail in the combat for His honour." The gift of Piety will elevate us to a holy familiarity with the Divine Persons, and especially with Our Lord. Lastly, there is the gift of the Fear of God, which will prevent this holy familiarity from

deteriorating into carelessness and irreverence, and will maintain in us a sense of due respect and profound humility in our relations with the Divine Majesty.

Neither must we omit the Acts of Oblation and Resolution, but show that we are ready to honour God the Holy Ghost by every means in our power. We will offer Him our hearts so that He may enter there and pray, for "the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26), and He will obtain all things. We will offer Him our voices and our arms to labour for the apostolate of souls, and hold ourselves ready to follow generously His inspirations.

Perhaps it would be well here to answer an objection that is sometimes made. It is said: How can the Holy Ghost come to us, when, if we are in a state of grace, we possess Him already? In the first place, we will remark that the same person can come in different ways to one and the same spot. Thus, if anyone asked whether Pope Leo XIII. had ever visited France, the answer would be "No"; although he came on a pilgrimage to Lourdes before he was made Pope. In the same way we can say that God the Holy Ghost as Creator and Preserver of life, is in the soul of the sinner, but we can also say that He is absent when, as the Giver of Sanctifying grace, He is not there. And so it follows that every time this Divine Spirit

brings to our souls a fresh degree of grace, we can say that He is once more making a new entrance into our souls; and this because He manifests Himself by fresh operations, and dwells there under another title.

CHAPTER XXVI

ACTS TO THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

THE time of Thanksgiving will not pass without our having had occasion more than once of addressing the Holy Trinity; and this because often when we say the word "Father," we are not thinking exclusively of the First Person, but of the Godhead—that is, the Three Persons in one God. Our Lord taught us to pray in this manner; and in the sixty and more passages in the Gospel in which the word "God" is on His lips, only the context shows whether it is to be interpreted in a personal sense, or to be addressed to the Divine Majesty—that is, to the Holy Trinity.

To give one example, many commentators consider that in the "Our Father" the word Father is used instead of God, and therefore signifies the Holy Trinity. Cornelius à Lapide remarks that the petitions in the "Our Father" concern the external glory of God, and the welfare of His creatures.

Now in exterior dealings with creatures, the Three Persons are equally engaged.

It is important not to forget the fact, that it is only by *appropriation* that the act of creation is attributed to the Father, the enlightenment of the mind to the Son, and sanctifying grace to the Holy Ghost. Nor is this without foundation, for it rests on an analogy between certain operations and the characteristics of each of the Three Persons in One God, and is an assistance to us to a better and fuller knowledge of the Blessed Trinity. The Father being the Author of all things in the Divinity, is justly considered as the Creator, although the work of creation was wrought by all Three Persons. The Word, the living image of His Father, and consubstantial with Him, is uncreated Wisdom; hence the reason for attributing to Him the operations of wisdom. Finally, the Holy Ghost is the mutual love of the Father and the Son, and therefore to Him belongs the work of sanctification—that is, the infusing of charity into our souls.

These facts will help us to realize that when we ask for some gift, or give thanks, we are at perfect liberty either to address the Divine Person, Who is the dispenser of this benefit, or the Godhead—that is, the Three Persons in One God.

The important point is that we should not neglect either of these modes of prayer, for

both assist in enlightening our faith—the one in the unity of the Divine Nature, the other in the Holy Trinity. All the different ways of glorifying God are food for the nourishment of our faith, and should be familiar to us. Therefore it will be no cause for surprise that we should invite souls, at least on certain days, to direct their acts of thanksgiving to the special glory of the Holy Trinity.

Are not the many different doxologies in the Divine Office and the Mass so many invitations to adopt this practice? more especially since the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity never comes to visit us except in company with the other Two Persons, and this because of the perfect union of the Three Persons in One God.

When the royal family comes to visit a large town, it is customary frequently to gather together a large orchestra in their honour, and yet all these preparations fall short of the wishes of the citizens. And to quote the words of St. Gertrude, by this Sacred Heart received in Holy Communion we possess a powerful and melodious instrument capable of worthily celebrating the praises of the Eternal Family.

"Heart of Jesus!" cried the Venerable Bernard de Hoyos, S.J., a veritable apostle of the Sacred Heart, "the Lyre whose harmonies are the delight of the Blessed Trinity,

inflame me with that Divine fire that consumes Thee." *

With what minute care the Three Persons whose task it is to form one by one the heart of every man, must have made the human Heart of Christ! The Father by imprinting on it His likeness, has given us a proof of His immense paternal love. The Word by uniting it substantially to His Divine Heart, has made It Divine, and made of It a link between regenerated humanity and the Divine mercy. The Holy Ghost shed on It the fulness of His gifts, and enkindled It with the flames of a boundless charity.

In the Holy Eucharist the Sacred Heart, this Masterpiece of the Trinity, is given to us. The Three Persons do not desire that we should make no use of this Gift, but rather that we should know how to profit by It to render to each of Them the homage and submission which are Their due.

St. Gertrude was so deeply impressed by this Divine economy that she wished our acts of worship to pass through the Sacred Heart to these Three Persons. One day at matins she was singing with all her strength the praise of the Holy Trinity, when in an ineffable manner the Three Divine Persons became visible to her soul. It seemed as if They bent forward with great tenderness towards the most worthy Heart of Jesus,

* Drive, "Litanies du Sacré Cœur," p. 27

which in Their presence gave forth music like a wonderful lute, and They added to It three fresh chords as a sign that for the future this Heart would supply all that was lacking to the acts of praise of this humble virgin." *

Do we require further examples to stimulate our fervour? Let us think of Francis of Sales on the day of his episcopal consecration. In an ecstasy of love before the Holy Trinity, he saw distinctly each of the Three Persons confer upon him a special grace of consecration, so that ever afterwards he considered not only that his whole person was anointed, but even his smallest actions and his very garments.†

In the "Life of St. Teresa," by Ribeira, we read that on several occasions she received similar favours. We will give a few extracts. "The Tuesday after the Ascension, after Communion, I complained to Our Lord of my many distractions. Soon a Divine fire took possession of my soul, and I saw clearly, in an intellectual vision, the Holy Trinity present in me. I understood the meaning of those words of Our Lord: 'If anyone love Me, he will keep My word . . . and we will come to him, and will make our abode with Him' (St. John xiv. 23). I knew by a sort of picture in what manner there is One God in Three Persons. All Three Persons together

* Drive, "Litanies," p. 24.
† Hamon, iii.

spoke to me. . . . On the Feast of St. Augustine, after receiving great lights in Holy Communion, I saw how the Three Persons whom I bear within my soul are in truth one essence, and yet how, nevertheless, They are distinct." On another occasion she writes: "I was inundated with light, and I saw how the Person of the Son alone and none of the other Persons, took human flesh." These were wonders which produced indescribable transports in the soul of the Saint.*

St. Ignatius of Loyola was not less privileged. Often he would shut himself up for two hours after his Mass, during which time he appeared like another Moses in conversation with the Most High, so radiant was his countenance; and his spiritual journal reveals wonderful inspirations concerning the Holy Trinity that stupefy us.

To St. Ignatius, Thanksgiving after Holy Communion was an ecstasy, without any movement on his part. To St. Francis Xavier, who sometimes was snatched away from the Altar-steps to attend to some apostolic call, Thanksgiving was an ecstasy in motion. What were the thoughts that occupied his mind during that hurried journey? The words that rose to his lips tell us: "O Most Holy Trinity!" he cried. And he repeated this exclamation so fre

* Ribeira, "Life of St. Teresa," IV., chap. iv.

quently all through the Indies, that the heathen adopted it, and used it as a holy and mysterious charm in all their dangers.*

CHAPTER XXVII

ACTS ADDRESSED TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

ANOTHER excellent form of thanksgiving is to repeat the *Magnificat* with Our Lady, putting our whole heart into it, while letting our minds drink in the sweetness of each verse. "O Holy Virgin, Mother of Jesus!" cried Gerson, "reveal to us thy thoughts when thou didst silently contemplate Him Who had just come to dwell within thee!" If we feel drawn towards this mode of prayer, we may well devote the greater part to Our Lady.

Blessed Grignon de Montfort was strongly in favour of this method. He tells us to think of Mary as our mother. In the first place, we receive the Sacred Host from her, for it is in the order of things that the *children's bread* should be given to them by the mother. Therefore, in the true childlike spirit, we should efface ourselves behind our mother, and ask her in place of us, and at this very moment, to receive Jesus, and rest content because we are one with her. We

* Bouhours, vi.

shall work with Mary, by her, and in her, and she in us. "We will lovingly receive Jesus, bending low in adoration before Him, and will offer to Him the acts of worship which are unknown to our dark cloud-enveloped minds." *

In one way or another Mary should have a part in every method of prayer. And the Church has to a certain extent provided for this, for some years ago she introduced the three Hail Marys, the Hail Holy Queen together with a special mention of the Immaculate Conception into the *official thanksgiving* of priest and people at the end of Mass, and made them obligatory. It is a most important step. These prayers are commonly termed "Prayers at the end of Mass." We do not pay sufficient attention to the fact that they are also *prayers after Communion.*

What a difference there is between a greeting made to Our Lord when we are alone, and a Hail Mary or Hail Holy Queen pronounced *with Jesus* dwelling within us!

It is as if we said: "Queen of Heaven and earth, overflowing with the plenitude of Divine gifts, Mother of God, well mayest thou be above the Saints and Angels, for thou art more worthy of praise than all the inhabitants of Heaven; now we have that

* Lhommeau, "Vie Spirituelle à l'École du Bienheureux."

which is able to pay to thee due honour, for we can offer to thee the praise of thy Son; He is in us, it is with Him and by Him that we say to thee: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace.'

"Thou art so lovable that millions of hearts could not bless and love thee sufficiently. But here we have a force that is capable of loving thee. We have to love thee with the Sacred Heart of thy Son Jesus; we join our affectionate greetings to His, so that they may form together a bouquet of flowers, whose sweet perfume will not fail to delight thee.

"How canst thou refuse anything that we ask of thee? It is impossible, for we possess the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Whose pleading none can resist. We are only poor sinners, lost in the depths of this valley of tears, but when we call to thee with the voice of thy Jesus, thou wilt listen to our cries and lamentations, and look with mercy on us, for in our hearts thou seest the face of thy Child. Elizabeth trembled with joy and wonder at thine entrance into her house, because by faith she saw Jesus within thee. And now; how wilt thou not be touched, O Mother, when thou dost recognize the Real Presence of thy Beloved Son in our hearts?"

There will be no difficulty in prolonging this loving paraphrase of the prayers at the end of Mass. At least, when they are repeated by the priest, we must not omit to

join our voices to his. Let us say the words with great piety, so that in very truth Jesus may speak through our lips.

We can follow the same line of thought when addressing St. Joseph, the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and the Archangel Michael.

It is as if we said to these great Saints: "You are so high in glory, and we are only poor creatures thrown like grains of dust on the surface of the earth. Yet at this moment you are forced to grant us an audience, for He Who speaks to you is your Lord and Master; it is the King of Kings Himself Who invites you by our lips to intercede for us and for the Holy Church. Hasten, then, His triumph, and throw the infernal spirits into the abyss." What a mighty power it is to have Jesus within us when we pray!

But to return to the Blessed Virgin. We cannot do better than take for our model the thanksgiving which she made every day for twenty years. Our desire is to love her maternal heart, and there is no surer way of pleasing her than by speaking to her of the love of Jesus for her. Not one action, not one word, not one moment of the earthly career of her Son, not one instant of His glorified and Eucharistic life, but had its acts of filial love for the Mother.

Having Jesus within us, let us join with

Him in offering to Our Lady the prayers that our piety may suggest. But, above all, let us make a special point of our acts of thanksgiving.

There is abundant cause for thanking Mary, because in many ways we owe the Blessed Sacrament to her. In the first place, did not the Incarnation depend upon her "*fiat*"? And the Word having taken flesh in her womb, does not the Sacred Flesh which is given to us come from her? For St. Augustine remarks that the very substance of Mary has become the substance of Jesus, and our food: "*Caro Christi, caro Mariæ.*"

Mary is not only the field where our wheat has germinated and grown to its full height, but also she has given her consent which was required for the preparation of this mystic nourishment. Like the corn which only comes to table when it has been ground, made into flour, and baked, so the Body of Christ cannot become our food unless It is crushed beneath the millstone of the Passion, burned in the furnace of suffering, and annihilated beneath the Sacred Species. For all this the consent of Mary was necessary, and it was given with heroic resolution. At the Altar, as by the Cross, she is the Virgin-priest, the Virgin who offers sacrifice.

In many other ways also she is a determining cause of this wonderful Sacrament. In all His works Jesus had His elect in view.

The greater the sanctity of a soul, the more power has it as the determining cause of the operations of Christ. Therefore we can see at once that as Mary surpasses in merit all the Saints, so she has a larger share than they in the loving designs which were the underlying motive of the Holy Eucharist.

And it is not only by her holiness that Mary has an influence over the Sacred Heart of the Divine Creator: He loves her because she is the Mother. The Blessed Sacrament was instituted chiefly out of filial love and gratitude to her, so that He might render back to her that flesh and blood that He had received from her when He came to earth; and also to console her for the exile in which He had abandoned her; and, lastly, to increase more and more, and consummate her sublime charity.

Since we owe to Mary this precious gift, it is fitting to recognize her under the figure of the woman in the Gospel who took flour and made bread for her family. Mary, the Mother of mankind, has not been deprived of this one of the noblest functions of motherhood—the nourishment of her children. The Sacred Host and the Precious Blood are gifts which come to us through her hands. For the whole world, as for the guests at Cana, she has obtained the mystic Wine. And the Church in her office rightly gives this passage from the book of the Proverbs: " Come and

eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you, and walk in the ways of prudence" (ix. 5).

After considering these different points, we can readily understand and admire these thoughts of Father Chaumont, the apostle of the race of Huron tribe, which he wrote in a letter to Blessed John Eudes. "I am very much grieved," he says, "because so many persons receive Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament without showing the smallest gratitude to her who gave Him to us." And the zealous missionary begged Father Eudes to found an association of priests who would promise never to say Mass without having as one of their intentions the desire to honour Mary.*

CHAPTER XXVIII

ACTS ADDRESSED TO THE ANGELS, THE SAINTS, AND THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

THE prayers at the end of Mass have already shown us how salutary and praiseworthy a practice it is to make use of Our Lord dwelling within us, to speak for us to the Angels and Saints to whom we have a special devotion. When we pray to them in the name of the love of Jesus for them, we are bound to be

* Drive, "Marie et la Compagnie de Jésus."

heard. At the convent of the Carmelites of Alba of Tormez, the heart of St. Teresa is preserved in a crystal vase. In the upper part, the wound made by the Seraphim's dart twenty-five years before her death, may be seen running from one side to the other. And numerous marvels attested by authentic documents have spread abroad the fame of this heart. On it has been seen, standing out in relief, a representation of the Holy Trinity, the image of the Heavenly Father, the figure of Our Lady holding the Divine Child, of St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, the holy prophet Eli—according to the different festivals of the Church. These prodigies evidently testify to the principal devotions of the holy Reformer.

We have here a striking symbol of that which comes to pass in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He bears within Him the image of all His elect; He knows them one by one, He loves them individually with a tender love. Nothing is too great for them. And nothing can render us so acceptable to them, when we have this Divine Heart, as to remind them of the love of Jesus for them, and to offer it to them. Since the Saints can move like the Angels from one place to another, we can hope without presumption that at our request those whom we invoke specially will come and form a court round about Jesus dwelling within us. Sometimes holy persons

have seen them thus surrounding their Divine Guest.

And those dear souls detained in the place of expiation, shall we forget them? Far from it! St. Gertrude, probably after Holy Communion, saw an abundant stream coming forth from the Sacred Heart, and bringing refreshment to Purgatory.

It is in the power of every communicant to cause this health-giving source to spring forth. Jesus is the more ready to comply because He sees these souls marked with the seal of His Divine Friendship, and He loves them. Jesus loves them because He sees that they yearn for Him with all the power of their being. "He loves them with a faithful love that never forgets any one of their good works, with a persevering love which nothing from henceforward can destroy, yet also with a jealous love which will not tolerate that the smallest trace of sin should remain in them. In a word He loves them with a Divine love that purifies, consoles, and beautifies, and thus prepares them for the great day of the eternal nuptials." *

Jesus sympathizes with their sufferings of which He has a clear knowledge, and desires nothing more than to see them set at liberty. He said to St. Gertrude: "Every time that thou freest a soul from Purgatory, I feel a

* Drive, "Litanies," p. 248.

much pleasure as if thou hadst redeemed Mine own self from captivity."

Nevertheless, Jesus cannot deliver them from the prison of fire until their debts have been paid. The justice of His Father is against it, for then the time of merit is passed. But here we have one of the most touching acts of the mercy of Our Lord. The brothers of these souls, members of the church militant, are still able to merit, and Jesus allows them to pay the debts of these poor suffering souls. One day St. Gertrude said to Him: "Are the exertions of those who make satisfaction for the departed acceptable to Thee?" And Jesus made the same answer as before: "Their efforts are as pleasing to Me as if they had freed Mine own self from captivity, and I will render it back to them according to the measure of My bountiful goodness."

Not only our penances, but also our supplications, are accepted in satisfaction for their sins, and the compassionate Heart of Jesus expects that we shall offer them to Him when we are one with Him, Heart to heart, in our thanksgiving. We ought to make use of our Communions and our intentions at Mass as a powerful means of assisting these dear suffering souls. How many times with His permission they have come to remind us of this duty. One instance shall be quoted: "St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi had just

learned of the death of one of her brothers. A short time afterwards she was praying in the choir when he appeared to her surrounded with flames. 'Oh, my poor brother!' she exclaimed, 'how you are suffering . . . what is it that you ask of me?' Then it seemed to her that she heard a voice speaking, and she counted up to the number of seven hundred. The soul was demanding seven hundred Communions. So Mary Magdalene, with the permission of the Mother-Prioress, begged for the Communions of her sisters. The number was quickly made up, and the soul now freed, appeared to her ascending to Heaven." *

The merciful ingenuity of the Sacred Heart has invented yet other means of lessening the penalties justice imposes. Not only can we offer our prayers and the value of our personal good works for these dear souls, but we can also draw for them from the treasures of the Church by gaining indulgences.

To attempt to enumerate the principal indulgences that can be gained by frequent Holy Communion would take too long a time. Let us each morning form the intention of gaining all the indulgences known or unknown to us which are within our reach. We will merely allude to the six *Our Fathers*, and *Hail Marys*, and *Glorias* of the Blue Scapular. The wonderful riches of these

* Perrier, "Vie des Saints."

indulgences, which can be so easily gained, are sufficient excuse for this digression.

The plenary indulgences of the Stations of the Cross may be counted in hundreds, since they include those to be gained by visiting the principal sanctuaries of Rome and the Holy Land; and the astonishing liberality of the Church accords almost the same indulgences to those who, wearing the blue scapular, say in any language the six *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glorias* as mentioned above, for the intentions of the Pope. This great favour is too little known and too little utilized, especially as in order to gain the indulgences it is not necessary to go to Confession and Holy Communion, a state of grace being sufficient.

Out of Charity for these poor suffering souls, we earnestly call upon all our readers to introduce this practice among their daily devotions. It would be most suitably placed at the end of our thanksgiving, which can profitably be brought to a close by reciting some vocal prayers.

CHAPTER XXIX

ACTS OF SPIRITUAL JOY AND LOVE TO OUR LORD

HITHERTO in our considerations we have deliberately restricted the number of acts offered to Our Lord to certain ones of the

greatest importance. But this is not to say that there are not others, such as acts of faith, humility, hope, confidence, compassion, joy, zeal, or contrition.

On reflection, it will be seen that these acts are included in those which have already been explained. Faith is as it were the connecting thread; humility accompanies adoration; hope and confidence are contained in the acts of petition; joy which rejoices over the perfections of Jesus, compassion that grieves for His sorrows, and zeal which is enthusiastic for His interests—are all different forms of love. Contrition is included in the act of reparation.

All the same, there is no reason why souls should not make a more formal use of these acts which we have just mentioned, and of others also, when they feel the need. This desire is a form of spiritual consolation, for, as has been said already, in moments of consolation we must spread our wings and let ourselves be guided by the breath of the Holy Ghost. Nor need we wait until we feel this impulsion so strongly that it drives all before it.

It would be well to treat at fuller length of the two acts which are the most important —namely, the acts of spiritual joy and confidence.

We cannot do better than endeavour to second the Divine intentions. All the

Fathers of the Church believe that spiritual joy is of the very essence of Holy Communion. St. Cyprian remarks that as the manna satisfied the desires of everyone, so this mystic Bread is the special delight of everyone that receives It.

"*Omne delectamentum in se habentem.*" The Holy Eucharist is a feast to which we must bring a joyful countenance and heart, inasmuch as that therein we partake of a generous Wine. In the words of St. Thomas: "We have here the Beverage that chases sadness away; here we taste of spiritual sweetness in its source." *

Now and then we might pass the time of thanksgiving in exciting within us these sentiments of holy joy. And blessed be the Divine Master when He condescends to let us feel the operations of His grace acting sweetly within us. Father Chaignon remarks: "But these delights are not vouchsafed to everyone, nor always in the same measure. Few souls are sufficiently purified, or detached from the world and themselves, or so crucified with Jesus that they are able to enjoy the savour of these chaste delights." †

Happily there is another and still deeper sentiment than this which moves our senses, and that is the joy that comes from the knowledge of the possession of a great good. Is it not a great consolation, even though in

* Opusc., 57. † "Medit. Sac.," v.

Communion we feel no sensible sweetness, to know with an absolute certainty that this incomparable Friend is present within us? "My beloved is mine!" Even when the soul is full of pain and bitterness she is able, and it is a great happiness, to turn to Him, and tell Him that she loves Him more than His gifts; to think of how His Sacred Heart is beating here within her heart; to be in an ecstasy because in a certain sense He has forgotten the government of the heavens and earth in order that He may belong to her alone; to congratulate Him on the state of glory which places Him beyond the attacks of His enemies; and with all the heavenly host to rejoice with Him over His Divine and human perfections, and the ineffable happiness which He enjoys in the bosom of the all-loving Trinity. Let us listen to these charming words of St. Francis of Sales: "In point of fact, Théotime, the soul which exercises the love of complacency never ceases to cry out from amidst this holy silence: 'Enough for me that God is God . . . that His perfection is boundless. Whether I live or die, what matters it since my Beloved lives and reigns eternally.' Neither can death cast a shadow over him who knows that his Sovereign Love lives. Enough for the loving soul to know that He whom she loves above all things possesses all things, for her life is more in Him than in herself,

for it does not live of itself, but the Beloved lives in it."*

It is good that the spirit of confidence should permeate our thanksgiving, lest we may be tempted to lose heart. Distrust grievously wounds the Sacred Heart of our Divine Master, while, on the contrary, confidence gives Him great honour, it is the grand act of homage to His goodness. At this moment it is easy to awaken such sentiments within us. The visit of a loving and influential friend is the surest way of restoring confidence to a soul that has lost heart. Let us take our inspiration from one of the meditations of the Venerable Father Eymard: "The end of the Holy Eucharist is to put confidence into our hearts. Out of goodness Our Lord has hidden Himself that we may be more at our ease in speaking to Him. When on earth the glory of His Divinity was so entirely concealed beneath the veil of His humanity that sinners and little children did not fear to draw near to Him. Only His goodness and mercy were visible.

"Now that His Body is transfigured, if He were to show Himself in His glory, we should not dare to address Him. But the appearance of this little Host can alarm no one. And when Our Saviour has descended into our souls beneath these humble Species, we

* "Treatise on the Love of God," Book V., chap. iii.

can converse with Him in all confidence and affection. Let us drive away all fear: He is here, not as our judge, but as our friend."*

A rich friend does not visit his poor neighbour in order that on his arrival he may display all his riches and claims to honour. On the contrary, he will sooner hide them, and remove any trace of awkwardness; he will make himself as simple as possible, and do all that he can to create a feeling of sympathy. We must accommodate ourselves to the familiar character of this Sacrament, to this intimate *tête-à-tête*, and Heart to heart intercourse.

But what about our sins? we cry. A friend does not come and see us in order to find fault, or at any rate he does not begin to do so on his arrival. And we must not forget that Our Lord never reproaches us during the first moments after Holy Communion. Towards the end, perhaps, when we are prepared for it, He may do so, and after He has pronounced words of sweet pardon.

Let us, then, converse without fear with this all-merciful and condescending Lord. We must talk to Him simply, and then learn to keep silence and listen. He will speak in His turn. We shall hear Him; the voice with which He speaks will be heard interiorly but it will be no less sweet than that with

* "La Divine Eucharistie," Second Series, fourth edition, p. 130.

which He charmed Magdalene, Levi, and Zacheus.

The conversation of Jesus in Holy Communion is of a most intimate character, and penetrates to the very depths of the soul. All that is required on our part is to be recollected, and to open our ears. We must listen to Him as a child listens to his mother, with that docile, filial love which opens the ears of the heart.

He will say just those words which are necessary to restore our courage, such as: "Be not afraid, I am with thee." "Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28). "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9). "Thou must fight, but am I not the Bread of the strong, the soldier's rations?" "Take My Heart that it may pay thy debts; It is open wide, enter in and appreciate the sweetness of being loved." "Thy cross is heavy, but I am carrying it with thee."

When we are inclined to lose heart and be distrustful is not the moment to ponder over our sins and feebleness. Our wish to do so comes from false humility, and is inspired by the Evil Spirit, who wishes to make us lose our balance and fall into the abyss.

Let us rather look at Jesus holding out His hand to us as He did to St. Peter when he walked on the waters. If He permits us to

be tempted, it is in order to make use of us to confound the pride of the tempter. If we could see clearly the way out of our difficulties, we should not have the merit that comes of confidence. Nor must we omit to make some good resolution when Our Lord is within us: we must set to work as if our success depended solely on our own effort, but at the same time we must declare to our faithful Friend that our whole trust is in Him, as though He alone were to effect the desired result.

BOOK V

SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER XXX

THE MODE OF OUR INCORPORATION WITH JESUS CHRIST

We should certainly deserve to be reproached if we did not give a brief account in this volume of a mode of thanksgiving in which both love and petition have a part; it has frequently been suggested to interior souls, and is of great profit to them. Monseigneur Landriot, following Bossuet, has said: "Incorporate yourselves with Jesus. Do not hinder the movement of your heart, but in the liberty of the children of God give yourself over to the workings of the Word." This phraseology is an echo from antiquity. "I am the wheat of Christ," cried St. Ignatius, when he was on his way to martyrdom; and St. Paulinus said: "Let us be the nourishment of God. May Christ consume us and give us life." St. Augustine places these words on the lips of Our Lord: "Dost thou desire to become great? Then take Me as thy Food, and it will not be that thou wilt

change Me into thee, but on the contrary thou wilt be changed into Me."*

What, then, is this incorporation with Christ?

We have here a metaphor full of meaning, which, if used with discernment, will explain many sublime truths.

The actual food and he who partakes of it are two separate entities, destined to so close a union that they finally become one. In the same way the Holy Eucharist establishes a perfect union between the communicant and Christ, which is ever progressing, until in a real sense they become two in one! St. Augustine frequently refers to this point.

"Only," observes the great doctor, "reversing what takes place in the case of material food, here the Food is greater than the one who eats. The union is accomplished by means of the assimilation of man by Christ."

Having made this fact clear, we can proceed to the consideration of man as the food of Christ.

The material bread that is the nourishment of man undergoes a great change, in virtue of which it enters into the participation of the life of man, and thereby its dignity and importance are increased; it is incorporated into the living man. This is the comparison that is used to signify the action

* "Confessions," vii.

of Christ upon us. The necessary result of this assimilation by Jesus is certain far-reaching alterations in the life of the Christian. Interior gifts and supernatural qualities are conferred upon him, whereby he becomes a partaker in the Divine life. Higher influences effect a change upon his innermost self; his nature is remade by Divine grace; virtuous habits take the place of evil inclinations; his affections are purified and strengthened; humility is substituted for pride, charity for self-love.

Nor is man merely the passive and contented recipient of this transformation; he has his part to fulfil by co-operating in the work of grace that is leading him on to the likeness of Christ. By the sacrifice of self-love and sensuality he has to assist the formation of Christ within him. He has to hasten on the death of the old man, which the new man is to replace. And above all, he ought frequently to approach this Sacrament, that has been instituted for the purpose of gradually working this transformation.

It is therefore quite in conformity with the Divine purpose that after Holy Communion we should break forth into holy desires to be changed into Christ, to be incorporated with Him. We offer ourselves, recoiling from no effort, no sacrifice, that shall advance this work. We promise Jesus that we will let

Him live again in our actions and our mode of life. We beg Him to intervene, to substitute His thoughts for ours, His will for our will, His affections for our affections, so that we are able to say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). And again the great Apostle writes: "For we being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (1 Cor. x. 17).

This spiritual union or incorporation with Christ, of whose wonders there is not space to speak in this book, does not take away our own nature; but it makes us men of valour, raised up and transformed after the model of the God-man.

St. Thomas does not hesitate to use the word *deified: "Suscipiens efficitur deiformis."* *

In the Incarnation the human nature of Christ was made Divine—man becomes God. In the Holy Eucharist the God-man showers His Divine gifts upon us. Here the Fathers, according to St. Cyril, make use of the simile of a red-hot piece of iron which by its contact with other matter conveys heat to it. The Divinity is the fire which enkindles the humanity of Christ, and then through Him passes on to all who come into touch with Him in Holy Communion.

The more acts of love and humble friendship that we make after Communion, the

* Opusc. 57.

more we are able to second the operations of this Divine fire, which assimilates us principally by means of charity, both actual and habitual.*

During the celebration of the Divine Mysteries a rite takes place that well expresses our incorporation with Jesus Christ. At the offertory a drop of water is mingled with the wine, and once this is done, it is impossible to separate the one from the other. What is this water? The Fathers tell us that it signifies all the faithful, and the blending of the water with the wine is a figure of the union of all Christian souls with Jesus. "If anyone," remarks St. Cyprian, "ventured to offer wine without water, Our Lord would be offered without us, which is impossible."† And in the same place the Liturgy gives us this wonderful prayer: "O God . . . in the mystery signified in the mingling of this water and wine, grant us to have a part in the Godhead of Him who hath vouchsafed to share our manhood, Jesus Christ Our Lord."

Our incorporation with Christ has a double significance: we act with Him, and He acts with us. This is the lesson which we must instil into our minds.

In the first place, both the passivity and the activity of Christ are imputed to us. That which He is in His relations with His

* Q. 79, A. 13. † Epistle 63, Ad Cæcil.

Father, and that which He does for His glory and on His own behalf and on ours. We live by and in Him in such a way that the moral and Divine value of His life is apportioned to us, and God Himself ratifies this appropriation.

Whether Christ immolates Himself, or adores, it is we who immolate ourselves and adore in Him: He is the Sacrifice of praise, and we are sacrifices of praise along with Him.

St. Paul fears not to say that Christ would be incomplete without us; he calls us "the fulness of Him, who is all in all" (Eph. i. 23). Not that we can add to the perfections of that worship which He offers to His Father, but because neither He nor His Father desire that He should render this homage alone. The order of things requires that the Head of the family should be accompanied by the other members, and never be without them.

Now, it is the Holy Eucharist that unites us to Jesus and makes us His members. This is not the place to discuss the various properties of the other Sacraments. Let us remember that only the Holy Eucharist has this ineffable union as its own proper effect. St. Chrysostom exclaims: "What is this Bread that you eat? It is the Body of Christ." To become the Body of Christ is the purpose of the eating of this Bread.

We can see now how fully we enter into

the Divine intentions when after Holy Communion we ratify by our complete adhesion this mysterious union that takes place within us, and give our full consent to the life that Jesus lives in us and for us, not in a multitude of words, but with a firm will. We should find our delight in the thought of the adoration of this perfect Adorer of His Father, and in the perfect homage which this Divine Worshipper offers to the Divine Majesty.

But we must not forget that if Jesus is one with us in order that He may act in our name, so He is one with us also to act *through us*. "If I sing psalms," said St. Augustine, "I must act as Jesus singing psalms. It is His voice that in the psalms is heard sometimes mourning, sometimes exulting, sometimes sighing."*

Whether we speak, pray, or suffer, we must act as Jesus praying, speaking, or suffering. He desires to live again in all His virtues. Every communicant should be a reproduction of Jesus living within him. No one person will be able to reproduce this image in its entirety, but each will be able to show forth some features of it, according to the outpourings of the Holy Ghost upon him. The lives of the Saints are all so many manifestations of the life of Jesus, and in reality form but one life. He is the main stem whence all the branches derive their

* "Enarr. in Ps."

sap, and on which various fruits are to be seen.

An excellent form of thanksgiving is to use this prayer of the Venerable Monsieur Olier: "O Jesus living in Mary, come and live in Thy servants, in the spirit of holiness, in the fulness of Thy might, in the perfection of Thy ways, in the reality of Thy virtues, in the communion of Thy myseries. Subdue in me every hostile power by Thy Spirit, for the glory of the Father. Amen."

By this manner of conversing with Our Lord we are able to form resolutions such as the following: "Henceforward it is no longer I who live, but Jesus Who liveth in me." Jesus is part of me; He takes my place, and my proud sensual personality disappears. I shall be nothing, He will be all. I desire to have His thoughts and intentions. I will love only what He loves, and in the same degree and for the same motive. My will is mine no longer, for Jesus wills in and for me. His Sacred Heart shall be my heart. All my energy shall be concentrated in wishing and executing His desires in my regard. May it be no longer I that use my eyesight, but Jesus through me, and the same with all my other faculties. To look at things from His point of view, to have complete possession of myself, as He possesses Himself, to take my nourishment and repose as He would have done in my place—that is my ideal

"For to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). As a consequence of this, the merit of our virtues and good works is due entirely to Him, since they are His. To Him all the glory; to us, the poor instruments, humiliation, that is to be forgotten and to be esteemed as nothing.

We will close this chapter with these words from St. Augustine: "To be one body in Jesus Christ: that, Christians, is your true sacrifice! So the faithful understood the matter, and such is the Church's meaning in all her dealings with the Sacrament of the Altar." *

CHAPTER XXXI

LENGTH OF TIME TO BE SPENT IN THANKSGIVING

THE question of the length of time that should be given to thanksgiving was only mentioned in the last chapter; it merits more careful consideration.

The decree of 1905 demands a suitable thanksgiving according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties. These words are sufficiently explicit to show us that the same length of time is not required of all the faithful. When St. Alphonsus desired that it should occupy an hour, or at least half an hour, he was speaking of persons of leisure.†

* "The City of God," Book X., chap. vi.

† "Praxis Conf.," and Appendix I.

Since the issue of the recent pontifical documents, the point which before all others we must try and understand, is that the short time at the disposal of busy people is no reason why they should be discouraged from even daily Communion. It might be said of time as of almsgiving: if you have plenty, give much; if you have little, give little; it is better to give a little than nothing. It is better when for some valid reason we are pressed for time to go to Holy Communion than to stay away.

One fundamental law governs this question—namely, that the soul must be in a state of grace, and have a right intention, nothing more. With these two dispositions it is better always to go to Communion than to abstain from receiving.

An actual, or at least virtual, right intention constitutes a sufficient preparation; and the same right intention, provided it accompanies the Communion and is not withdrawn when the communicant returns from the altar, is also the sole obligatory form of thanksgiving. To do more is of great value and profit, but in point of fact it is only requisite in order that more abundant fruit may be gathered from the Sacrament.

It is a pleasure to quote these words of Father Devine: "Working people should not hesitate to go to Holy Communion in their rough clothes when they are hurried and

obliged to go to their work immediately after they have received Holy Communion." * Father Cros also writes: "The poor servant-maid and the mother of a family, who leave the church at the end of Mass, do not forget to continue their thanksgiving on the way home; and when they have entered the house, they take up their several duties as servant or mother, with God and for God, and their thanksgiving is carried on in the best way, that is, in perfect harmony with their condition of life and daily work. The best thanksgiving is to make a good use of the day that follows."†

We are told that General de Sonis during the Italian campaign frequently set off on his journey of inspection at dawn. When he saw a church-tower in the distance, he went straight towards it, and, entering the church, asked for Holy Communion, then continued his ride immediately after—a way of doing that is deserving of our praise and admiration.

But to return to the case where there is no need for haste. St. Alphonsus Liguori asks us to spend half an hour in converse with Jesus after Mass. But if our lukewarmness finds this too long a time, he will be satisfied with a quarter of an hour; yet by the way he expresses himself, we can see that

* Devine, "La Commun. Fréquente," p. 54.
† "Enfants à la Ste. Table," Second Series

he grants this concession with regret. "A quarter of an hour," he says, "is little, very little."* Another writer attempts in no way to modify this demand of St. Alphonsus: "At least a quarter of an hour after Mass," he says;† and the Venerable Father Eymard writes in the same way. In our search among the different works of theological writers, only one, Father Barbe, S.J.,‡ wishes for a longer space of time: as a general rule a quarter of an hour is advised.

For the priest this quarter of an hour under ordinary circumstances must be counted from the moment that he kneels down to say his thanksgiving. In the case of children, Father Cros remarks: "It is understood that it begins the moment after they have received the Sacred Host."§ And are there not many types of persons who in this respect have to be treated as children? But those who are versed in the practices of the interior life will not venture to take advantage of this concession.

But, it may be asked, why a quarter of an hour in preference to any other length of time?

In this matter we must be careful to remember that a special duty is laid upon

* Selva II, Instit. i.
† Lehmkuhl, vol. xi., No. 155.
‡ Barbe, S.J., "Com. Quotid.," p. 44.
§ "Enfants à la Ste. Table," chap. xxxviii.

us by the duration of time that the Real Presence subsists within us, a point which every director of souls has always in his mind. Could we ever dream that, knowing our Divine Guest to be still within us, we could leave Him without serious motive? Should we not rather, like Mary, keep Him company, or, with Martha, only go away from Him with regret because we are forced to do so?

A full quarter of an hour is necessary before we can be certain that through the change that takes place in the Sacred Species Our adorable Guest has left us. "The time spent in digesting the Holy Species is not the same in all cases owing to differences in the functioning of the digestive organs; yet for a person in good health, whether priest or layman, the alteration does not take longer than a quarter of an hour." *

It is not the Church's custom to trouble over exceptional cases, as, for instance, that of an invalid with a slow digestion; she has even blamed those who wished to receive a larger Host in the hope of keeping the Real Presence of Our Lord for a longer time.†

The writings of her doctors show that she regards solely the normal limit of time during which the corporal Presence is within us. Father Faber says that there is no surer sign

* Lehmkuhl, vol. xi., No. 111.
† "Cum ad Aures," 1679.

of lukewarmness than to subject the Blessed Sacrament to light treatment.

Finally, we must not forget that although the Sacred Species are dissolved, and the bodily presence of Christ as man has disappeared, as God He still remains within us to receive our worship, and to infuse into us His Divine life in virtue of the Communion we have received.

"The transitory union of His Body with ours, however admirable, and however great a proof of His love, is only a sign of the permanent union of His Divinity with our soul; this it is which constitutes the fruit of the Sacrament, and the end for which it was instituted; . . . it is this that we should look for and prize in Holy Communion."* Once we have clearly made up our mind as to the amount of time we are able to devote to our thanksgiving, let us keep to it faithfully and not attempt to shorten it for some whim or foolish caprice, or because we are in a state of spiritual desolation. The devil knows well the immense good that our souls can derive from the regular use of these moments and will not fail to exert his cunning to make us lose some part of it. This is a time to put into practice the advice of St. Ignatius which was given for the time of meditation: "Go on for some moments after the time fixed, so as to accustom oneself not only

* De Smidt, "Notre Vie Surn.," p. 1.

to resist the enemy, but to strike him to earth."

The Venerable John of Avila ordered two Altar-boys to follow a communicant to the church doors because he was in the habit of leaving as soon as Mass was over. Let us not merit such a lesson. It is true that with the Saints the act of thanksgiving was continued from one Communion to the next; and the Church in the office of St. Aloysius Gonzaga is bold enough to make us beg for the same favour. "It is thou, O Lord, who hast fed us with the bread of Angels: do Thou make us to live as Angels upon earth, and after the example of Him Whom this day we specially venerate, to pass all our days in thanksgiving."

In this sense it is right to say that a holy life is the best thanksgiving. But that did not hinder the Saints from remaining for a long space of time in profound recollection after the reception of their Saviour: and of each of them may be said these words which have been applied to St. Aloysius Gonzaga: "He seemed as though he were withdrawn from the realms of sense, and remained for a long time absorbed in God."

When the Curé d'Ars was a young man at Ecully, his thanksgiving lasted far into the morning; he could not bring himself to end it. "When he became a parish-priest, the length of time passed in thanksgiving made

up to him for having offered Mass without long pauses, so that he might inconvenience no one: he remained on his knees for hours. But when a number of penitents were waiting for him, his personal devotion gave way to the demands of charity. During the last ten years of his life he was content to spend a brief moment in profound adoration at the foot of the Altar, and then to pass straight to the sacristy to hear the confessions of the men who were awaiting him. Only the ejaculatory prayers that were heard to escape from his lips, and " the golden aureole which sometimes lit up his whole countenance, showed that he remained in actual union with His Divine Lord." St. Rose of Lima, on her return from church, shut herself up in a hut at the bottom of the garden, where she could continue her devotions; but on Fridays, after her Communion, she passed the whole day and the following night wrapt in colloquy with her Divine Spouse.

St. Philip Neri used to prefer saying his Mass in a private chapel, where the order was given that as soon as he had taken the Chalice he was to be left undisturbed for two hours, after which time the Altar-boy returned for the ablutions. These examples are offered for our admiration, and to fill us with shame for the little that we do, and not for our maladroit imitation.

The Venerable Father Eymard passed

more than an hour—sometimes two hours—in the profoundest adoration after he had offered Mass. "Thanksgiving," he said, "should be still more recollected than our preparation;" and he added: "During the day behave as if you were a Saint who that morning had passed an hour in Heaven. Do not forget Jesus' royal visit to you."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE THANKSGIVINGS OF THE SAINTS

THE acts of thanksgiving of God's best friends abound with His graces, which He has multiplied in order that we may learn to place a high value on this practice; it is for us to take to heart this important lesson.

We will first consider graces of illumination.

St. Thomas Aquinas regards Holy Communion as the most Divine of all our religious exercises. It would be impossible to relate all the lights and favours that he received therein. The eye of his soul was opened at the breaking of the Bread, and truths of which previously he had known nothing were made plain on his return from the holy Altar; all day he remained penetrated with this heavenly unction. It was from the Blessed Sacrament that he drew forth those treasures of knowledge that made him a prince of theology.

It was the custom of many of God's servants to make no important decision without first consulting the Divine Majesty in the Mass and during their thanksgiving after Communion. Therein it was that St. Ignatius begged His Sovereign Lord to make known to him His Divine pleasure concerning each article of his constitutions, and a flood of light and spiritual sweetness gave him the answer he desired. It was during thanksgiving that St. Aloysius Gonzaga, who was in doubt as to his vocation, heard a clear voice telling him to enter the Company of Jesus. Fifteen years earlier, on St. Laurence's day, it was told to St. Stanislaus Kostka after his Communion that he had only five more days to live, and that he would be admitted to take part in the approaching heavenly triumph of his beloved Mother, in Heaven. And on the 15th of August she came at dawn to find him and lead him to Paradise.

According to the testimony of those to whom Blessed Margaret Mary confided her most intimate secrets, there were only two things in this world that could cause her joy: to go to Holy Communion, and to suffer. Her First Communion, which she made at the age of nine, gave her such a distaste for amusements that from that time onwards she could find no enjoyment in them. And it was after Communion that Our Lord, in

order to attach her for ever to Himself, "made her see that He was the most beautiful, the richest, and most accomplished of all lovers."* The greater number of the Divine communications by which the riches of the Divine Heart were revealed to her, came to her before the Altar, or beside it. She says herself: "The greatest graces that I received from His bounty came to me in Holy Communion."† How frequently in her writings we come upon passages such as the following: "One Friday *when I had received my Saviour*, He placed my mouth to the wound in His Sacred Side, and kept it there tight pressed for the space of three or four hours, while I experienced joys that cannot be expressed. He said to me: 'In the enjoyment of Me all happiness can be found.' And I replied: 'O my Love! gladly would I give up all these extreme delights so that I may love Thee for Thine own sake.'"‡

The Curé d'Ars, as soon as he had finished Mass, knelt down before the Altar, his hands folded, at times regarding the Holy Table with such radiant joy that it was thought that he saw Our Lord there. Never had been seen a face more expressive of adoring love, or more illumined with heavenly light.

* "Vie et Œuvres," tome ii.
† Terrien, "Sac. Cœur," Book IV.
‡ "Vie et Œuvres," i., p. 87.

And when the hour for catechism arrived, he spoke often of the adorable Eucharist with lips that seemed as if they had been purified with the burning coal of the prophet. These are some of his words: "When we have been to Communion, the soul is filled with the balm of love as the bee extracts honey from the flower. . . . We feel that something wonderful has happened to us, a sense of well-being fills our whole self to its inner recesses: what does it mean? It is Our Lord who communicates Himself to us. God and the soul are like two pieces of wax that are melted into one. We are the bearers of God. If you take a vessel full of liquid and close it securely, you will preserve the contents. In the same way, if after Communion we are recollected and keep Our Lord with us, we shall experience for a long while this consuming fire that will make us burn with zeal for good."*

It was during his thanksgiving at Notre Dame de Fourvières that the Venerable Father Eymard heard a sweet voice urging him to devote himself to promoting the glory of the Holy Eucharist, and to found the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Many times Blessed Mother Barat, during this hour of heavenly joy, was, as it were, transported beyond herself: "I was obliged to call her, to warn her, and even to touch

* "Père Monin," Book V.

her," says one of her daughters; " she looked at me with wide-open but unseeing eyes. It seemed to some that at this holy time she was, as it were, bathed in the light of glory."*

But we must not confine our attention solely to these graces of illumination. How many wonders of all sorts can be found in the thanksgiving of the saints !†

Both St. Angela of Foligno and St. Margaret of Cortona found in the Host a sweet savour that remained in the mouth for a long time. We also read in the annals of Citeaux that one of the monks enjoyed this inexpressible sweetness, which lasted often for a whole day. On one occasion when he had to administer a rebuke to one of the brothers, he was lacking in the charity that was needed; on the morrow it seemed to him as if the Host was extremely bitter to the taste. Whereupon he recognized his fault, did penance, and to his great joy at his next Communion he once more experienced this sweet savour.

St. Catherine of Siena in Holy Communion was inundated with a delicious perfume that caused her nearly to lose consciousness; and another illustrious St. Catherine, the Saint of Genoa, on her return from the Altar, was filled with a celestial aroma, so that she was

* Baunard, Book XII.
† See Ribet, " Mystique."

obliged to beg Our Lord not to grant her this favour because it attracted so much attention. St. Frances of Rome made the same petition, but in her case it was not granted. So exquisite was the perfume that came from the spot where this holy mother of a family was making her thanksgiving, that the members of the congregation looked at the neighbouring Altar to see what wonderful flowers were upon it.

St. Teresa often entered into ecstasy after Communion: on the Feast of St. Joseph she was seen to rise the length of three span from the ground. It was easy to guess of whom she was thinking when she said to her sisters: "Do you imagine, my daughters, that this Divine Food does not also nourish the body? For my part, I know that it has this power. I know a person who, amid many infirmities, often experienced the most acute sufferings, but no sooner had she received the Bread of Life than she felt them all vanish as if someone had taken them away in their hand. This frequently occurred although her pains were of such a kind that they could have nothing imaginary about them. The wonders of this Divine Bread are so well known that I must abstain from relating a number of others that concern this person; I was well informed of all that took place, so that I know there was no shadow of falsehood about them."

In his old age, St. Alphonsus Liguori was so infirm that he could not make a single genuflection: he had to be assisted at the foot of the Altar. But when the consecration took place, he received a strength and suppleness of body that was astounding, and managed the genuflections with ease: it was as though the weight of his body was suppressed; his feet scarcely touched the ground, and many times he was seen to rise sensibly above the Altar-step.

St. Joseph of Cupertino used to look very pale and exhausted every morning; but no sooner had he communicated than his face became radiant and full of health: the Blessed Sacrament alone sustained his strength. Similar favours are related of St. Peter Alcantara, St. Angela of Foligno, St. Benedict Joseph Labre. Many, like St. Catherine of Siena, passed weeks, sometimes months, without partaking of any food other than the Holy Eucharist. Others, again, like St. Stanislaus Kostka and St. Philip Neri, in the depth of winter were obliged, when they came away from receiving Holy Communion, to apply ice to their bodies to moderate the Divine fire that was burning within them. "God is wonderful in His saints" (Ps. lxvii. 36), "and holy in all His works" (Ps. cxliv. 17).

CHAPTER XXXIII

A THEORY COMMON TO CAJETAN AND SUAREZ

We should certainly be guilty of an oversight if we did not give the attention it deserves to a consideration which will be of great assistance to our will in thanksgiving.

It is this: the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is not within us only at the moment when we swallow the Host, but remains all the time that the Sacred Species continue within the communicant. This assertion, that seems at first sight so surprising, can be more fully explained. If during the time that the Divine Guest is dwelling within her, the communicant is producing more and more perfect dispositions, the effect of the Sacrament *ex opere operato* will not be in proportion to her dispositions at the first moment after receiving, but to those of a more perfect character produced during the time of thanksgiving.

For a right understanding of this wonderful fact we must consider its doctrinal aspect.

The Council of Trent lays down that the Sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*—that is to say, of themselves—and from the fact that the rite instituted by Jesus Christ is applied by the minister of the Sacrament

to some subject, and that on his part the subject presents no obstacle to its action.

Here we come to a point that is misunderstood by many persons: the actual good dispositions of the subject are far from exercising no influence on *the principal effect of the Sacrament,* that which is said to be *ex opere operato.*

That these supernatural acts have a value in themselves (*ex opere operantis*) and merit an increase of sanctifying grace if made in a state of grace, is a fact that no one doubts; but many do not see another important result, which is that they assist in determining the degree of efficiency *ex opere operato* of the Sacrament.

And this is much in the same way as a jug, by its size, regulates the amount of water it can contain, or as the beauty of the impression made by a seal depends upon the fine quality of the wax and its liquid condition.

The theologians place the *dispositions* among the *material* causes. "Their true function is to dispose the subject for the reception of the Sacrament."* These dispositions act upon the soul as upon matter in order to prepare it to receive the impress of the efficient cause—that is to say, of the Sacrament.†

* Gonthier, "Études," February, 1893.

† *Ibid.*

The words of the Council of Trent in which it speaks of the infused justice bestowed by the Sacrament, and declares that the Holy Ghost gives it to each soul according to its disposition,* do not seem to admit of any other interpretation. It may be said—to use mathematical terms—that the actual dispositions are one of the factors in virtue of which the *opus operatum* varies—that is, the proper effect of the Sacrament.†

To return to our considerations on Holy Communion. When at the coming of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament He finds certain good dispositions in the soul, He bestows on it the fruit of the Sacrament which is an increase of sacramental grace in direct proportion to those dispositions. But if the soul that possesses Our Lord by an increase of fervour produces more perfect dispositions, her capacity for grace is also enlarged, and immediately the Divine Guest fills this new capacity with His grace; in this way the effect of the Sacrament *ex opere operato* is augmented.

The numerous theological reasons underlying this mode of thought—of which St. Augustine and St. Thomas show some traces—form the best foundation for our considerations. But it is to the celebrated Dominican Cajetan that is due the honour of having thrown a ray of light on this facet

* S. VI., C. 7. † *Ibid.*

of the jewel of the Holy Eucharist. Suarez the Jesuit eagerly seized hold of this opinion, and in such a manner that some years later De Lugo in his defence of this thesis was able to say that already it had gained the acceptance of the majority of theologians.* St. Alphonsus Liguori was in raptures over it, and in these later days Ballerini has explained it at length and shown that it need fear no serious opposition.†

"It appears," says Suarez, "that the Divine Master could not have chosen a better means of exciting man to greater fervour and reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament during the time that It remains within him. Stimulated by the hope of receiving more abundant fruit, he will redouble his attention. And this because the time of thanksgiving is most suitable for recollection, for the communicant has nothing to do but to draw all the profit he can from the Divine Food within him; while, on the other hand, at the moment he has received the Sacred Host in his mouth, his attention is distracted by the exterior act of reception, and cannot be devoted to interior acts."‡

These remarks are specially opportune for the priest, who, during the time that he is at the Altar, is of necessity absorbed by the

* Disp. xii., s. 2.
† "B. Palm.," tome iv., p. 628.
‡ Q. LXXIX., Disp. lxiii., s. 7.

ceremonial of the Liturgy, and must wait for the end of the Mass before he can become entirely absorbed in adoration of his Divine Guest.

But we will quote in an abridged form some further passages from Suarez. It is undeniable that if the priest drinks the chalice with more perfect dispositions than when he consumed the Host, he will receive a larger part of the Sacramental fruit, although he partakes of only one spiritual feast and makes only one Communion. The Communion of the faithful is also a repast of a certain length of time; they are able, therefore, by the effect produced by the Sacrament *ex opere operato* to gain a fuller spiritual life if their aptitude is increased during the feast. And the fearless doctor continues with intrepid logic to say that even if anyone makes a sacrilegious Communion and repents while the Sacred Species are still within him, grace is immediately bestowed upon him, and the Sacrament produces forthwith Its effects.

It may be noticed that the Council of Florence invites us to adopt the analogy of bodily nourishment so that we may understand the effects of the Holy Eucharist. Now, bread feeds the body when it undergoes the vital action of the digestive juices: why therefore should not the Bread of Life actively nourish the soul during the time that

the spiritual energies of the soul are concentrated upon it? Christ is there as our food, and carries on His work of nutrition in direct proportion to the dispositions of the individual soul.

Our Lord comes to stir up our love. If he finds us lukewarm, He uses actual grace to excite us to fervour. "And then," says Rodriguez, "the greater the number of these fervent acts, the more abundant the outpouring of grace, not only because of the merit of these acts, but also owing to the virtue of the Sacrament."*

How admirable is this means, whereby Jesus and the fervent soul emulate one another! Jesus stimulates the soul to greater faith and love; the soul corresponds, and becomes inflamed with love, whereupon immediately the Divine Guest, with still greater liberality, increases the habitual and actual graces that are the effects proper to this Sacrament. And this wonderful exchange lasts until the end of His visit. "Oh, what beautiful harmony is this!" cries Suarez. "How fittingly it illustrates the goodness and prodigality of Christ our Redeemer!"

And we would add: how deplorable and disastrous is the frivolity of those persons who almost immediately after they have received Our Lord suffer themselves to be led away by worldly distractions or business

* Tr. 8.

affairs. Senseless ones! Christ is showering His graces upon you like rain; you have only to open your hearts and immediately they will be filled to the brim. But you prefer to keep them closed; you would rather let your thoughts wander, or you fall asleep. Let us listen to these words of St. Teresa: "Our Lord is not in the habit of making a poor return for His sojourn in the hostelry of our soul so long as we keep Him faithful company there." For the future let us be more attentive and more fervent in our acts of thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE THANKSGIVING OF CHILDREN

In the decree *Quam Sigulari* we read: "Everyone who has the care of children should do all that they can to induce them frequently to approach the Holy Table . . . and see that they do so with all the devotion possible to their age." If this chapter had been omitted, this injunction would have been disregarded, and one of the predilections of the Sacred Heart ignored.

Is there a more touching scene in the Gospel than that in which we see Our Lord so closely surrounded by the little ones that the disciples thought it their duty to drive them away? "Suffer the little children to

come unto Me," says the Good Master with authority; and He adds these words which merit our deepest consideration: "Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it" (Matt. x. 14, 15).

By receiving the kingdom of God, do we not mean that we welcome Jesus by faith and love? Now, the Divine Master declares that in this respect children should be our example. This one word overthrows all the objections put forward by many persons against the frequent Communion of our little ones. It is said that they are giddy, that they have their faults. That is true; and Our Lord does not deny it; yet He indignantly rebukes the disciples who make this a motive for wishing to drive them away: He proclaims aloud that their simplicity, their naïve faith, and affectionate dispositions so counterbalance their faults that grown-up persons should endeavour to become like unto them.

In point of fact, see how these little ones believe without questioning or mistrust; how sometimes their bright intuitions and thoughtful remarks astonish us. With what meaning they repeat the words: "My good Jesus, I love Thee with all my heart." They recall to our minds the words of Our Lord: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8). And again:

"I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones" (St. Luke x. 21).

Do not say that children can barely discriminate between ordinary bread and the Sacred Host; we must give up these false ideas. Let us observe them closely, and we shall discover that these simple words: "The good Jesus is there in the Host" have a clearer meaning for them than for us. "Will you tell me whether you know more of these matters than a child?" asks Lejeune. "For my part, although I have dedicated a portion of my life to the study of this Sacrament, when I have said: 'My God is there!' I have reached the end of my knowledge. . . . We can let our imagination embroider on this theme; we can frame beautiful phrases concerning it; but at bottom our science resolves itself into an act of faith which a child of seven years can make as well as a master in theology."* As to the giddiness of children, the one point which, according to the terms of the decree we should remember, is that they need our help, for they require to be educated in pious practices. In their thanksgiving after Holy Communion it is specially important that we should suggest to them some simple method that can awaken the ideas and sentiments that we should like

* Lejeune, "Conseils," p. 246.

them to have. To leave them to themselves before they have acquired a fixed habit would be to condemn them to a time of weariness and distraction. The main thing is to remove the occasion of distractions by fixing the imagination and suggesting some simple acts.

In the case of children this counsel of St. Teresa is obligatory: "Oh, my daughters, when you have received Holy Communion, *shut your bodily eyes so that you may open the eyes of the soul,* and then look at Jesus in the centre of your heart."* Let the head be bent naturally, the eyelids lowered gently without wrinkling the forehead. Children should practise this; and, if necessary, on their return from the Altar a word of reminder can be said. In this way exterior distractions can be avoided. To drive away those distractions that come from within, we should appeal to the vivid and matter-of-fact imagination of the child. We must accustom him to think of Jesus present within him as in one of the mysteries of the Gospel. The best method will be for some time to make him imagine that his heart is the manger, which before Communion is empty, and afterwards contains the Divine Infant. On either side Mary and St. Joseph are kneeling, and above them angels are singing. This composition

* "Way of Perfection," 35.

of place is easy to the smallest child who has admired the crib at Christmas-time. For a few moments he silently regards this scene in his imagination; he is so entirely absorbed that he scarcely breathes, but his heart is warm, for faith and love are doing their work.

As soon as these impressions begin to lose their force, the child must say some prayer. Here there can be no question of the long acts prepared for older persons; they would be incomprehensible to these little ones. "In order to accustom them to be sincere in their relations with God, let them only express those feelings which they are capable of experiencing themselves . . . without violating the vocabulary from which the great mystics learned their burning aspirations."*

The child should be taught to say by himself certain short phrases as though he were addressing his father or mother.

When there is a group of children going to Holy Communion, they should be made to speak out, and even in a loud voice. The twenty-first chapter of St. Matthew shows how Our Lord hates the sound of worldly conversation in His sanctuary; but He takes pleasure in the pious voices of His little ones. He told the Pharisees who were scandalized because the children

* Dementhon, "Memento de la Vie sacerdotale," twelfth edition.

gave Him an ovation within the sacred precincts, that He looked to these little ones above all others for the tribute of perfect praise; and among the acclamations which rang forth on the day of His triumph those that were most sweet to His Sacred Heart were the Hosannas of these childish voices: "And the children crying in the temple, and saying: Hosanna to the Son of David" (St. Matt. xxi. 15).

We can arrange things in this way. The priest, or some one deputed by him, first slowly, and articulating clearly, pronounces a short sentence; the children, who have previously been warned to pay attention, repeat it three times after him at the same pace; then there is a brief pause before another phrase is said.

We will give a few examples: "Holy Child Jesus, I believe that Thou art present within my heart.—Holy Child Jesus, with Our Lady, I adore Thee.—Divine Child, I adore Thee with St. Joseph.—Jesus, my God and my Brother, I love Thee with all my heart.—My Guardian Angel, help me to love Jesus.—My Good Jesus, I thank Thee for Thy visit, and for all Thy benefits.—My Good Jesus, forgive my sins; I wish to do better.—Merciful Heart of Jesus, save the souls of my family.—Jesus, Thou Who art so good, save the soul of my father.—Jesus, Who loveth so tenderly the Blessed Virgin,

bless my mother.—My Good Jesus, I offer Thee my heart and all that I am.—My Good Jesus, to please Thee, I desire to be very good."

These can without difficulty be arranged under seven principal heads (see Chapter VIII.)—namely, acts of adoration, love, thanksgiving, reparation, petition, oblation, and resolution. Each prayer might be prefaced by the words: Act of Adoration, etc.

It may be asked: Why should each phrase be repeated three times? In the first place so as to lessen the fatigue of the director; and secondly, in order that it may more thoroughly penetrate into the child's mind and be a reality to him. The children should be taught to say the phrases, the first time as well as they can, the second still better, and the third time best of all. In this way the idea is impressed on their mind, their affections are aroused, while the pause that follows leaves time for Our Lord in His turn to speak in His own mysterious manner. Does not the Liturgy take pleasure in the number three, as we see in the *Agnus Dei* in the Mass and Litanies, in the *Domine non sum dignus*, and elsewhere?

At least from time to time we should do well to initiate the children in the method of addressing their colloquies to God their Father by uniting themselves to Jesus their Brother.

It is a remarkable fact that St. John in his first epistle, which is so overflowing with love, congratulates the children because they know God the Father, "I write unto you babes because you have known the Father" (1 St. John ii. 14). And in the different passages in which Our Lord speaks of the children, He usually associates them with some mention of His Heavenly Father: "I confess to Thee, O Father, because Thou hast revealed them unto little ones" (St. Luke x. 21). "He that shall receive one such child as this in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me" (St. Mark ix. 36). "Their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 10).

Let us lead these little ones to know their Father, even if we do nothing more than teach them to unite themselves with Jesus their Brother before saying the *Our Father,* in order that they may say it well. We can little by little suggest that they should take each of the seven acts and address them to God the Father in this way: "O God my Father, with Jesus I adore Thee.—Heavenly Father, I am Thy Child: with Jesus my Brother I love Thee.—Heavenly Father, through Jesus I thank Thee for having adopted me as Thy child.—Heavenly Father, through the Sacred Heart of Jesus I beg of Thee to save the souls of my family," and so on.

We have learned by experience in many children's retreats* that this method of making the children recite their prayers out loud is of great profit. It is surprising how soon their voices take on a note of meaning, of recollection, and devotion. In addition, it produces a great impression upon the adult congregation, many of whom are in serious need of this lesson.

After a few moments there is no reason why there should not be a pause in these ejaculatory prayers, provided only that it does not last too long; the children can then, if they wish, open a book or say their rosary. It is much wiser to accustom them to a short intensive thanksgiving after Holy Communion than to let them find the time too long. Above all, we must cultivate in them an attraction for Holy Communion, and not weary them. They are usually the first to go up to the Altar; so that the time when the Host is being distributed to the rest of the faithful can count as a part of their time of thanksgiving. They have only a moderate spiritual capacity; now, the Decree lays down the recommendaton that the thanksgiving should be proportioned to the frailty of the

* For several years the author has been conducting children's retreats in the South of France which have resulted in an extraordinary awakening of piety among the scholars of the lay-school and their parents.—Translator's Note.

communicants. Obviously we should be acting in direct opposition to the spirit of the Church if we kept them a long time after the Mass was over.

Let us rather, often bring them to Jesus their Friend; for the more frequently they have to make their acts of thanksgiving, the better they make them. Soon each child will be able to employ this time without assistance.

May an ever-increasing number of these dear little ones bring to the Sacred Heart the same joy which St. Agnes, St. Stanislaus, and other youthful Saints gave Him by their thanksgivings!

APPENDIX

A METHOD OF OFFERING MASS FOR THOSE WHO ARE GOING TO HOLY COMMUNION

A method of hearing Mass is here added by special request. It is given in brief, so as not unduly to enlarge the little volume.

ACTS BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

If it is our intention when receiving Holy Communion to envelop it as it were in one o the mysteries of the life of Our Lord, we car refer to Chapter VI., where suggestions, botl for preparation and thanksgiving, will b found.

Here are given a few outlines that wil assist us in piously occupying the time o Mass, presupposing that for the thanksgivin we shall make use of the method of the act explained in detail in the previous chapters.

When the Priest is at the Foot of the Altar.— Think of your own sins and those of the whol world which need expiation. Who will bea this awful burden ?

The Priest at the Epistle-Side.—Recall t mind the sighs of the prophet and patriarchs calling by their intense longing for th Victim of expiation.

As the epistle-side reminds us of the history of the world before the coming of Christ, so the gospel-side represents that of the human race from the days of the preaching of the Gospel unto the end of time.

During the Gospel and the Creed.—Rejoice that you are one of those who have received the preaching of the Gospel.

From the Offertory to the Consecration.—Think of the bruised wheat, the grass that is crushed, types of the sufferings Christ has endured to obtain mercy for us, and in order to prepare for us this Eucharistic Bread, wherein are concentrated all the fruits of His Passion.

At the Consecration.—Remind yourself of how Jesus, by thus veiling Himself beneath the Host, is truly immolated for the glory of His Father, and your good.

From the Pater to the Communion.—Excite your desire that Our Lord will come to you, making use of the words of St. John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God!" Humiliate yourself saying: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter into my heart." The following acts can also be used:

Act of Faith.—Divine Saviour Our Lord, true God and true Man, Son of the Eternal Father, and true Son of the Virgin-Mother Mary, I believe that Thou art really present in this Sacrament. Thou, the Author of life,

art here in all Thy Majesty, although Thy glory is hidden from me. In this Host I adore the same Jesus Who was born at Bethlehem (mention here some of the different mysteries of Our Lord's life on earth), the same Who died for me on the Cross, and Who at the Last Day will come to judge the world. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe, I adore: increase my faith and love!

Act of Humility and Confidence.—Lord Thy awful presence causes me joy, but it also makes me tremble. Thou art so great, and I am so small; Thou art Divine purity, I am all sin-stained. Almost would I say like St. Peter: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." But if Thou wert to take me at my word, what would become of me? Whither should I go to flee from Thy Face? In whose arms should I find a refuge? Thou alone art pardon and life. I will throw myself, therefore, into Thy arms, or into the security of Thy Sacred Heart. I know well that the Blessed Sacrament is not a reward of virtue, but a succour for our misery—and it is this that leads me to Thee. I am the poor sufferer who comes to be healed. I hope in Thee: cure my sickness. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have confidence in Thee!

Act of Contrition.—Divine Master, I know that to receive Thee worthily a stainless heart is needed. But alas! from my infancy upwards my life has been all sinful: how many

evil thoughts I have had, how many base desires half consented to! How many thoughtless, frivolous, and even wicked words there have been; how many bad actions; and how many good deeds left undone! How many sins have been committed against God and my neighbour, and in my daily duties! I should despair, were it not that Thou art the God of mercy, the God of Magdalene, the God of forgiveness. It is not only out of fear of Thee, but also because I love Thee that I detest my sins. Thy Precious Blood will purify me more and more, and by Its virtue I shall henceforward avoid all deliberate sins, and even the smallest fault. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I desire to be all Thine!

Acts of Love and Desire.—My good Jesus, I come to Thee because I love Thee, and also because I have a great need of Thee. My soul is parched, Thou wilt pour upon it the streams of Thy grace: it is barren, Thou wilt make it fruitful: it is sick, Thou wilt heal it; feeble, Thou wilt strengthen it. And more than aught else, I am incapable of giving to God the honour that is His due. He is sovereignly adorable; Thou wilt adore Him for me: His infinite Majesty has been offended, Thou wilt help me to appease His wrath: He is the source of all good. Thou wilt obtain from Him all that is lacking in me, Thou wilt thank Him in me for all His

benefits. Come, O Sacred Heart of Jesus! and supply for my powerlessness to adore and love God as He deserves to be adored and loved. O Heart all on fire, unite Thyself to my heart, that it may get warmth from Thy Heart and glow with Divine fire.

INDULGENCED PRAYERS.

Prayer of M. Olier.

O Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in Thy servants, in the spirit of Thy holiness, in the fulness of Thy might, in the perfection of Thy ways, in the reality of Thy virtues, in the communion of Thy mysteries. Subdue every hostile power with Thy Spirit, for the glory of the Father. Amen.

Prayer of St. Ignatius.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within Thy wounds, hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.
From the evil enemy defend me.
And bid me come unto Thee.
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee.
For ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to gain the Plenary Indulgence at the Hour of Death.*

O Lord my God, I accept now, and henceforth, from Thy hand, with a firm and free will, whatever kind of death shall please Thee, with all its anguish, pain, and suffering.

* Whosoever after Confession and Communion shall recite this prayer, even long before death when in full health, it shall be applied to the moment of death according to his purity of conscience (Pius X., March 9, 1904).

Prayer before a Crucifix.

Behold, O kind and most sweet Jesus, I cast myself upon my knees in Thy sight, and with the most fervent desire of my soul I pray and beseech Thee that Thou wouldest impress upon my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity, with true repentance for my sins, and a firm desire of amendment, whilst with deep affection and grief of soul I ponder within myself, and mentally contemplate Thy five most Precious Wounds; having before my eyes that which the Prophet

David put on Thy lips concerning Thyself, O good Jesus: "They have dug My hands and feet: they have numbered all My bones."*

* Plenary Indulgence applicable to the souls in Purgatory (July 31, 1858).

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VILLEFRANCHE, S. J., G.

AUTHOR

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion,

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